

One More Step Out of the Pit

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Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandoms:	Dream SMP-Fandom , Minecraft (Video Game) , Video Blogging RPF
Relationships:	Wilbur Soot & Technoblade & TommyInnit & Phil Watson , Toby Smith Tubbo & TommyInnit , Wilbur Soot & TommyInnit , Technoblade & TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , TommyInnit & Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Toby Smith Tubbo & Wilbur Soot & Technoblade & TommyInnit & Phil Watson
Characters:	TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Wilbur Soot , Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF) , Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Toby Smith Tubbo , Ranboo (Video Blogging RPF) , Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , Dream SMP Ensemble
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Superheroes/Superpowers , Villain SBI except Tommy (for now ;D) , Except the villains aren't really bad bad , Hero TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Implied/Referenced Child Abuse , Kidnapping , (It's more of a political prisoner situation but still kidnapping) , Fear of Death , Fear of torture , Mostly Based on Dream SMP with a bit of Orgin's SMP so I can make Tommy a chicken , Sleepy Bois Inc-centric , Found Family , Mostly Fluff Despite the Premise , Knife Wound , Blood and Injury , Needles , Nonconsensual Drugging For Medical Purposes , Warning for gif in the chapter 10 and 12 notes , Touch-Starved TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF)
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Stepping Stones , Part 1 of Adriana Snow's DSMP Writing Starting Pack
Collections:	Dream SMP Fics (Mainly Tommy (Yeah I'm That Bitch)) , Luna's MCYT recs , Crow Cult's DSMP Favorites , SBI superheroes/powers au my beloved , the best of dream smp , comfort fics to get emotional about , tommyinnit vigilante aus , Reds pog au collection!! :D , Reds hero AU collection (+MHA) ✨👁️✨ , Red thinks these works are awesome 🔥 , Red considers these works poggers :) , Red thinks these are neat 👍 , Red's book collection , Angst my beloved :) , Reds longest known fics :) , poggers_dsmpfics_con , Dream SMP fics that butter my bread , RBKBE , so what im a tommyinnit kin , zania's favourite fics , Found family to make me feel something , my aetwt addiction , self employed!! , Toads Top (absolute banger) Fics tm , Reds Hyper-Fixation Stories , SBI fics that give me the will to live , SBI Fics for the soul , Things That Keep Me Up At Night , The best dsmpt/sbi fanfics in my opinion , Bookshelf , Purrsonal Picks , Completed stories I've read , Dream smp fics that help me live , Dsmpt fics , still cool fics :) , Finished works I loved , Technoblade: Into the Techno-verse , wow i really am reading mc fanfiction 🥰🥰 , comfort fics , thinksmoon's collection of best sbi fics , finished fics i adore , Books Like Poems , fics in my SBI enderchest , ctommy.ctommy , chomolo chommy , Cross' Collection of DSMP/SBI fics (finished) , The best MCYT fics you've ever read , Dsmpt fics I re-read obsessively , family? found. mental health? significantly improved. hotel? trivago. , Amesfaves , Less trauma but still trauma but also happy? , All kinds of SBI fics , sbi fics i want to be read aloud at my funeral , mcyts kick ass in vigilante fics , Fics Spider Likes <33 , Fics I enjoy , i treasure these more than you can imagine , and i will tell you that i love you again and again every day until you feel it to be true , Mcyt(mostly SBI) fics

[that I adore](#), [Completed reading](#), [superhero aus](#), [Space and Superhero AUs That Are Actually Worth Your Time](#), [SBI \(an a lil crimeboys/bedrock bros shhhhh\)](#), [completed fics](#), [ohh what's that? *trips and falls down the hole*](#), [sbi comfort :](#), [Bang Bam Who Gave The Child Superpowers](#), and I will adore you forevermore, [SBI Superpower fics bc I have issues](#), [Loxe's Collection of Iconic MCYT Girls](#), [moth's fanfic recommendations](#), [Phil's the kind of a guy to look at the child and ask "Is anyone gonna adopt them?" and not wait for an answer](#), [Simply the best dsmp Fics](#), [The Awesome Fics Bookshelf](#), [UltraRed's Favorites \(mcyt\)](#), [Found Family is My Coping Mechanism](#), [i am queer i am here these block men help my existential fear](#), [I'm gonna remember those](#) 🧡, [I would sell my soul and every organ to even the sketchiest mofo in the joint just to be able to read these again for the first time again](#), [when insomnia hits](#), [Wonderful DSMP Fanfics that are Worth the Reread](#), [Top Tier MCYT](#), [Mcyt fics](#), [Parsonsaj's Best of the Best of the Best](#), [Talented](#), [Brilliant](#), [Incredible](#), [Amazing](#), [Showstopping](#), [Spectacular](#), [top tier SBI/crimeboys fics that distract my from my homework](#), [Ash's Favorite Completed MCYT Fics](#), [the reason i'm an insomniac](#), [mcyt faves](#) 📺, [Mcyt Tommy fics](#) 🥺, [SBI to Make You Cry](#), 🧑🏻‍🚒 [Dream SMP Fics](#), [My Entire History](#), [SBI for when I'm sleepy](#), [like clockwork](#), [Hullo_stranger's comfort fics](#), [IDK WHAT TO DO WITH THESE BUT I LIKED THEM](#), [Haha im crying-](#), [Altes' "Cream of the Crop" top rated DSMP fics](#), [MMR](#), [This is such a good fic-- WAIT WHEN DID I GET TO THE END](#), [My Favorite Comfort Fics](#), [Works ready to be binged](#), [fanfics that hurt me but i love them \(authors should pay for my therapy\)](#), [Sad stories over 40k](#), [fics kit has finished and also sobbed his heart out over](#), [hixpatch's all time favorites](#)

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One More Step Out of the Pit

by [AdrianaintheSnow](#)

Summary

It had been Tommy and Tubbo for practically forever. They clawed their way out of hell together. They discovered their superpowers together. They started working for the Superhero Guild together before even coming of age. Tommy probably owed Tubbo his life ten times over. So, when the three supervillains he'd been assigned to bring in managed to take Tubbo hostage, well, there was really only one thing to do.

He knew, of course, he was signing himself up for torture and death by offering that trade, but that was okay.

It'd have to be okay.

Notes

Look... eneli wrote a fantastic and entertaining superhero AU for the Dream SMP and superhero AUs are kind of my thing so... this happened.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

- Translation into Español available: [Un paso más fuera del pozo](#) by [ScapeSystem](#)
- Inspired by [Restricted Work] by [eneliii](#)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I,” Whippoorwill said, nose dripping blood onto the cement floor. Tommy wondered if his shoe was bloody now or if it had taken a second for the blood to well up after the kick to the face he’d just delivered the man. There had been stunned silence for a few moments after Tommy had used Whippoorwill’s face as a springboard. Whippoorwill was apparently still so shocked by Tommy’s very pog move that he’d forgotten to try to use his powers on Tommy, “am going to skin you alive and feed you to my dog.”

“Quite the threat there, Bitch Boy,” Tommy taunted. “You’ll have to catch me first.”

Whippoorwill’s eyes narrowed behind his mask. “That can be arran-”

“You don’t have a dog,” another voice interrupted.

“Shut up,” Whippoorwill said as Tommy let out a cackle.

“You don’t,” The Blade said. Tommy glanced at the imposing figure of the man casually strolling up to stand beside his ally and immediately grew suspicious. There had been three of them only a couple of seconds ago, Tommy was sure. Where was Philza and why were they acting so... casual all of a sudden? Tommy looked up, scanning the room.

Whippoorwill seemed to notice. “Why don’t you *come down from there*,” he cooed in a sing-song tone. Tommy winced at the sharp edge to his voice, unsure for a moment what it was meant to do before the support beam he’d been standing on suddenly snapped. He jumped up as it started to plummet towards the ground tilting his body so he could plant his feet briefly on the wall and shove off of it like a swimmer shoving off the side of a pool. He went zooming past their heads before spreading out his arms to make his slow fall more precise. His feet touched down softly on top of a table.

“You probably should have made something fall on top of him instead of out from under him,” The Blade drawled.

“Maybe you should stop with the criticism and try to stab the bastard,” Whippoorwill snapped, but Tommy was filtering out their bickering at this point, having figured out what it was: a distraction. He’d caught just a flash of green when he’d been falling and turned his attention in that direction. He jumped and spring boarded off a nearby pillar to propel himself towards the wall, hand catching a pipe in the ceiling so he could swing and make it through a gap about a foot wide between the top of the wall and the ceiling.

“Shit!” Whippoorwill’s voice echoed dangerously after him, but he was too slow and Tommy went careening into Philza, taking them both to the ground, the man’s wings unable to stop it. Knowing he did not want to engage in close combat with Philza of all people, Tommy began to move the second they hit the ground, rolling off of him and jumping as high as he could to grab the thing Philza had been reaching for a moment before. He let himself fall fast, ducking and rolling as he hit the ground and landing crouched.

“Guessing this is what you guys were here for,” he said cheerfully. “Don’t know what it is, but I’m going to have to say no.”

Philza was already on his feet, wings flared impressively and Whippoorwill had screeched a hole through the wall Tommy had hopped over for him and The Blade.

“Well anyway,” Tommy said, backing up a step. “I think it’s time for me to go.”

“Mate,” Philza said in a reasonable tone which Tommy knew was actually a threat. “Exactly where are you expecting to go?”

“Let me guess,” Tommy said, wryly. “Hand it over and you won’t let Whippoorwill feed me to his imaginary pet dog.”

Philza made a face and Tommy shoved the little glowing orb in his pocket for safe keeping. He smirked just a bit, already having an escape route in mind. Philza in many ways had an advantage over Tommy. He was bigger, stronger, and had wings that could let him actually fly instead of just fall with style.

These things could also be disadvantages. Philza watched him, as he backed up to the wall, large, imposing, and backed by his allies. Tommy flipped open the just big enough for him to fit down it trash shoot and quickly hopped in feet first. He laughed at the sounds of surprise and anger as he zoomed away. Good luck following when none of them could fit and even if they could, none of them had a way to slow their decent in the tight space before they hit the garbage at the bottom.

Tommy was home free.

~

Well... not quite home free.

“You let them get away?” his supervisor raged back at headquarters. Tommy tried not to cower because he was a big man, a big strong superhero, and he’d just stopped some dastardly plot by a group of three powerful supervillains all on his own. But... well... he was... not afraid, definitely not afraid of his supervisor and mentor, that would be silly, but he was healthily cautious around the man. He really, really, really did not want another round of personal training sessions with him. “This is the fourth time!”

It was more than the fourth time really. He’d had many more brief run-ins with the SBI all together, in pairs, and individually, but he tried to keep that fact off the radar as much as possible. However, this had been an official mission Dream had sent him on, so there was no way to get Puffy to pretend like it didn’t happen for him.

“I’m sorry,” Tommy said as quiet as he could. Tommy was not often quiet, but Dream did not like it when he was loud. “I prioritized stopping whatever they were doing instead of capturing them. It was a mistake.” It was not a mistake, Tommy knew. If he ever had engaged with even one of them head-to-head, he’d surely be dead or worse by now. Discounting that one fluke where The Blade had decided to not slit Tommy’s throat for some unknown reason. Tommy was sitting here today out of a mixture of quick wits, stubbornness, and luck.

“Yes, it was,” Dream said coolly. “You failed your job.”

You couldn't beat one of them let alone three of them. Tommy thought angrily, but he was not stupid enough to say it... again. Dream had once lost a one-on-one duel to The Blade. He... did not like being reminded of it. Instead, Tommy looked at the ground. "I'll try harder," he promised.

"See that you do," Dream said. "You're not getting paid for tonight."

Tommy swallowed his protests. That was... not ideal. Tommy was already living paycheck to paycheck without a night's work being docked. Yet, it was better than the alternative both physically and financially. Being tossed back into training meant not only getting half pay for however long the man decided he needed more training, but also would require medical supplies in the aftermath that Tommy simply did not have in stock. A missed paycheck meant having to ration food a bit harder, but it was still better than the alternative.

"Sorry," Tommy said again.

"You should be. Now go."

Tommy did not have to be told twice. He got up quickly and left Dream's office as fast as he could.

It was past time for Tommy to go home by this point. Dream had kept him waiting for about 2 hours before finally calling him in to talk. He was supposed to get off at 10pm, but it was almost 1am now. Tommy was exhausted, but he still had quite the walk home.

He grabbed his bag from his desk and tossed it over his shoulder, trudging out of the building and waving at the members of the night crew he recognized.

The night was chillier than he'd been expecting, and he flipped up his hood, curling his arms around himself as he walked. He didn't like walking home so late. Usually at 10 there were still some people around, but the roads were practically deserted at this time of night. He hoped he didn't get mugged. Not that they could probably actually mug him considering he was a trained superhero, but it would still suck if someone tried.

Of course, just as he had the thought, he stumbled across a pool of dark liquid on the sidewalk. It was hard to make out exactly what it was since it was between streetlights, but it certainly looked like blood splatters. He groaned to himself, but he couldn't not check it out. There was a trail of the liquid that went past some buildings. Tommy lightened his footsteps until he was practically not touching the ground. He was surprised when he stepped into a little green area surrounded on all sides by large apartment buildings. Weird. Luckily, the area was lit up with some sort of softly glowing stones and the 'blood trail' ended up stopping under one of them. Except in the light, it clearly was not a blood trail. It was dark blue, not red, like maybe someone had spilled some ink. Well, that was a waste of time.

Yet, as he turned to exit the strange little alleyway, he caught sight of a sign. 'Community Garden,' it read, 'Take what you need.'

Tommy paused. Oh, this was very illegal, he thought, as peered around him at what after a moment of observation was obviously rows of vegetables. An uncontrolled food source? Whoever had planted this could face so much jail time and that was before accounting for however they had gotten the seeds. By all rights as a superhero, Tommy should call this in immediately.

On the other hand... Tommy carefully picked his way through the garden. It was pretty even in the dark. Tubbo would *love* this. He picked a couple of vegetables, only enough that could fit in his bag without being squished and left the rest. He felt... a little guilty even though it was an illegal garden

and had literally said he could take what he needed on the sign. Still, he continued his trek home feeling a little lighter despite the illegal weight in his bag.

Chapter End Notes

@People who read my superhero AUs in another fandom and also enjoy the Dream SMP. Hi ;)

Are you afraid?

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Here's a bit more status quo before getting into the action.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

This house was a nightmare, Phil thought for very much not the first time.

“Phil, please make him stop,” Techno pleaded through a mouthful of pancake. It was about 7am in his household and things were progressing in an unfortunately normal manner.

“Will, stop,” Phil ordered.

Wilbur did not stop. He continued to strum his guitar while spewing out sing-song words that inhumanly echoed against Phil’s skull. “Is it annoy-oy-oying?”

“Yes,” Techno groaned, and it was. It was the most annoying thing in the world the way his voice skittered and crawled up and down Phil’s back, like he was being poked with icy cold fingers repeatedly. It was painless, but Phil still wanted to slam his own head into the wall. Or, better yet, Will’s.

“Can we not have one breakfast without light torture?” he asked his son.

“No, Phil,” he continued to sing, and invoking Phil’s name made the annoying sensation of his voice dig deeper into his skin. “I need to practice, and you are a captive audience because you love me.” Unfortunately, this was fact.

“Shut up, shut up,” Phil begged. “Put the pancakes in your mouth and shut up.” He slammed down the last platter of pancakes he’d been making and put two on the boy’s plate. Wilbur ignored this, continuing to make the low-pitched warbling sound as he stummed on his guitar.

“I’m going to kill him,” Techno said. “I don’t even care anymore. I’m 98% sure it wouldn’t be permanent, but it would be so satisfying.”

Phil knew that was a lie, of course, (though he wondered when he’d gotten numb to those sort of jokes) and so did Wilbur. “Technoblade will not kill me because he is far too soft,” Wilbur sang even louder.

“Wilbur seriously,” Techno snapped, wincing at the increased volume. “I have a headache.”

Wilbur’s mouth snapped shut immediately and Phil let out a sigh of relief. The fingers on the guitar paused, letting the last strummed chord fade. Phil watched as those fingers shifted and rearranged themselves to strum a different chord. “This is Technoblade’s headache song,” he sang along with the new tune. “This is Technoblade’s headache song. Techno has a headache, so we’ll sing it all night long. Oh, we’ll sing it all night long.”

The tension that had been lining Techno's shoulders all morning slowly leaked out of him. "How are you both the worst and best person in the universe?" Techno asked as Will repeated the chorus again. He let his head sink down onto the table and Phil had to act fast to keep his not yet braided hair from falling into the syrup. "You're a lyricist. You'd think you could come up with something less stupid for it," he grumbled. Phil patted his head with a soft laugh.

Wilbur just smiled through his song without pausing the "verse" of 'ba da da da's that came faster with a slightly different tune from the lyrics. It was a familiar song in their home, its origins from the first few months they all lived together, though the tune had changed slightly as Will perfected it over the years.

The pattern repeated: two run throughs of the chorus and a string of 'ba's and 'da's' three more times before Will paused. "Better?" he asked, just a touch smug.

"Yeah," Techno grumbled reluctantly. He peeled his face off the table and grabbed his fork to stab another piece of his pancake.

"Good," Phil said, rubbing his back. He turned to Wilbur. "Now shut up and eat your god dammed food before it gets colder than it already is."

Wilbur grinned at him. "Don't you want a song, Phil?"

"Shut it," Phil said, pointing a warning finger at him. "Shut."

"But..."

"Shut."

Will rolled his eyes and finally, blessedly began to butter his pancakes in preparation for eating them.

"We should just lock him in his room for the first hour he's awake," Techno said. "Morning Wilbur is annoying."

"I can give you back that headache, Techno," Wilbur said, as he drenched his pancakes in syrup. There was no tune of a threat to his words though.

"I can give you a sword through your..."

"Boys," Phil warned and even though they were rightfully far too old to have to listen to him, they both simmered down.

Phil was finally able to eat his breakfast in relative peace after that, though Will did absentmindedly hum as he ate. It was a light, calming sound though, so Phil didn't mind.

"I want some tea," Techno said as he picked up his and Phil's plate. Will was still finishing off his bacon, using it to scoop up the last remains of his syrup puddle. "Anyone want tea?"

"With honey?" Will said, puppy dog eyes fully engaged.

Technoblade rolled his eyes and didn't answer which Phil and Wilbur took to be a yes. "Phil?"

"Yeah, thanks Tech."

Techno nodded and stole Wilbur's plate out from under him. "I wasn't done with that," Will said with a frown.

"I'm not watching you lick syrup off your plate like a dog again."

Wilbur huffed but didn't argue any further.

"How was your night, Will?" Phil asked.

Wilbur turned to him, straightening a bit at the clear indication that they were switching over from breakfast time (where shop talk was disallowed) to business time. He shrugged in response to Phil's question. "Was alright," he answered. "Talked to Schlatt. Did some recon. Watched Techie sleep for a bit."

"Yeah, would you quit that?" Technoblade said from over by the sink. "It's creepy. Your eyes glow in the dark."

"You snore," Wilbur informed him cheerfully. "The Chicken was out and about at about 1am which is weird. Pretty sure he's a second shift hero."

Phil's interest was immediately piqued at the mention of the superhero. The Red Glider (though Phil did think calling him 'The Chicken' was rather hilarious) was quickly moving from nuisance to legitimate opponent in Phil's mind despite the fact that his power was a discount version of Phil's own. He'd managed to get in their way constantly the past few months and somehow none of them had managed to land a hit on him. Just yesterday he'd managed to prevent them from stealing a rare suppression orb and then fucked off down a trash shoot of all things when Phil had thought he'd had him cornered. "Find out anything interesting?" he asked Will.

Wilbur closed his eyes in thought. "No," he said after a moment. "I, uh," a blush crept up his neck. "Got distracted I think."

"That's alright, Will," Phil said.

"No, it's not," Wilbur grumbled. "It would be a great way to get intel on the horrible little monster if *he'd* work with me. God, I so badly want to wring that little hero's neck like the chicken he is."

"He's not that bad," Techno said, setting down three mugs of tea.

"Your standards are low," Wilbur replied. "He's an annoying bastard, and he will die by my hand. Did you see what he did to my nose?!" He pointed at said nose and the blooming bruise there.

"To be fair, he was just doing his job," Phil pointed out. Without even saying anything, he reached out to Techno who turned obediently to give access to his hair. He'd already brushed it out before breakfast and offered Phil one of the hairbands on his wrist.

"Would you have kicked my nose in during your hero days?" Wilbur questioned.

"Assuming you weren't my kid?" Phil asked, making sure he'd gathered up all the loose pink strands of hair before starting to braid. "I would have beaten your ass Will."

Wilbur pouted at him, though it clearly was mostly for show and Phil laughed.

"He did beat my ass," Techno contributed. "He was fucking terrifying." There was a softness to it like it was a good memory, but part of Phil still recoiled at the reminder of those times and he decided to

change the subject.

“Speaking of the Red Glider,” he said. “We don’t have many more chances at a suppression orb. We need to come up with a plan to get around the hero agency if we’re actually going to get into the Netherrealm. The next easiest one to get that I know of is in The Vault. We’ll need fire resistance potions, though since it’s in the center of a pool of lava.”

“Any way this plan can avoid running into Mr. Cluck?” Wilbur asked.

“That’s a pretty good idea, actually,” Phil said. “You mentioned it was weird for him to be out at 1am. Do you know when he usually gets off?”

Wilbur contemplated the question, staring into his tea. “Bout 10,” he said after a moment.

Phil hummed. “He probably works, what? Noon to 10 then? If we strike in the mornings, we might avoid him. Maybe we’ll have better luck. We can go try to steal some fire res from the Blaze Lab today.” He finished off the braid and secured it before pulling away.

“If we can get Wilbur out of the bathroom before noon,” Techno said.

“Hey!”

“If we can make Wilbur get out of the bathroom before noon,” Phil agreed with a chuckle.

Chapter End Notes

Don't worry! I promise someone will be in pain the next chapter. :)

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

There is some sword/knife violence in this one.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Are these tomatoes?!” An excited scream was what woke Tommy up. It was not even two hours after he’d fallen asleep and part of him wanted to be pissed about being woken up when he was so exhausted. The other part of him smiled into his pillow.

“Cut them open,” Tommy called back.

He listened to the rustling coming from the kitchen area as Tubbo rushed to do as he said. “Seeds?” Tubbo asked after a moment, his voice quieter and closer now like what he was saying was a secret. It *was* a secret. Tommy peeled his face off of the pillow to look up at the boy in their bedroom doorway. “Where on Earth did you find these?”

“I stumbled on a hidden community garden on the way back from work last night,” Tommy explained.

He watched the war on Tubbo’s face as he bit his lip. His hands were covered in tomato juice from where he’d picked a few seeds out of the vegetable. He was cradling them between his palms now. “These are very illegal to have,” he said. Yet, despite his half-hearted protest, the seeds had already started to sprout in his hands. As Tommy watched, a baby stem curled up his finger, a pair of leaves opening and sitting at the tip of his thumb.

“You should find some dirt for them,” Tommy suggested softly.

“Right,” Tubbo agreed. “Dirt, water... and sun somehow in a place no one can see. Or maybe a grow light in the bathroom? I’ll figure something out.”

Tommy nodded, struggling to keep his eyes open. Tubbo seemed to notice. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I didn’t mean to wake you up. I was just excited.”

“I know Tubs,” Tommy yawned.

“You got back kinda late last night, huh?”

“Had a run in with the SBI,” he said.

“Are you hurt?” Tubbo asked, concerned.

Tommy shook his head. “They didn’t even manage to get a finger on me,” he assured proudly, but then deflated a bit. “But, uh, Dream wasn’t too happy that I didn’t arrest them. I got whatever they were trying to steal, but that wasn’t enough for him. So... no paycheck.”

Tubbo frowned. “What were you supposed to do?” he asked. “1v3 the SBI of all people?”

“Apparently.”

“That’s not fair.”

“Life’s not fair,” Tommy reminded.

“I hate that you fight them,” Tubbo said, quietly. “The Blade killed 4 level 6 heroes with a flashlight and a set of car keys two years ago and that’s with him being taken unaware and alone.”

He’d also held a sword to Tommy’s neck once. It had been just them alone in an alleyway. He’d lowered it a moment later and slipped away into darkness without a word. Tubbo didn’t know that though.

“Eh, Philza’s scarier and Whippoorwill’s more creatively bloodthirsty.”

“They shouldn’t send you after any of them.”

“They know I’m a big man!” He paused at the look on Tubbo’s face. “I’ll be fine,” he promised.

“I just worry...”

“Don’t,” Tommy said. “I’m wily. Like the coyote... wait, no. I’m the Road Runner! The Road Runner wins those things, right? Never gets caught, right?” He’d never really had an opportunity to watch cartoons. He’d just absorbed knowledge from other people talking about them. “That’s me! Meep meep motherfucker.”

Tubbo cracked a half smile. “Well,” he said. “No paycheck, but we do have veggies and veggies that will regrow if we’re careful to hide them. Well, the tomatoes are fruit, but still.”

“Not a fruit,” Tommy enlightened him.

“I... they are?”

“No,” Tommy said solemnly. “I reject that reality.”

Tubbo stared at him for a moment and then shook his head. “Go back to sleep Tommy. I’ve got to get ready for work anyway. I’ll make you something for breakfast and leave it in the fridge.”

“Mmm, thanks.”

“See you at work,” Tubbo said, closing the door behind him. He and Tubbo’s work schedules just barely overlapped. He worked 4am-2pm and Tommy worked Noon-10pm with one day off a week. They’d somehow managed to scam having the same days off this month thanks to Puffy, which was nice. Otherwise, they’d barely see each other except when they were both asleep.

...

Thinking of sleep...

Tommy woke to the sound of an alarm on his phone at 8am. He barely resisted the urge to throw it out the window. The only thing that stopped him was that it was expensive company property, and he did not need to have that added to his bills.

Groaning, he pulled himself out of bed and into the small bathroom to take a shower. He hadn't gotten the opportunity to wash the gross off himself last night. He winced in sympathy for Tubbo as his bedmate.

A few minutes later, he was padding into the kitchen. He glanced in the fridge to see a Tupperware container labeled 'Breakfast' in Tubbo's horrible handwriting. Popping open the lid revealed scrambled eggs with tomatoes mixed in, and after making some toast, Tommy sat down on the recliner to eat. (It's fine. It was already stained to hell when he dragged it up here from the trash, so it wouldn't matter if he spilled.) There was a sticky note on the arm that didn't have a bite taken out of it. 'Buy melk and bread today, pls.-Tub' it read.

Tommy grabbed the discarded pen next to it and wrote 'No.-Tom' with a smile on his face. It looked like he was going to the store before his shift today. He glanced at the time on his phone. Ugh. He should probably get moving if he wanted to get to the shop and back before needing to leave for his shift.

Reluctantly, he put his dishes in the sink and went to the bedroom to change. He pulled Tubbo's green hoodie over his t-shirt for warmth since it wasn't like the boy was using it right now, and it was the warmest piece of civilian clothing they had. He counted out how much money he had in his wallet, winced, and dug his hand into their 'saving's account' (and old pickle jar).

Figuring he had enough cash on him, he left the apartment. His and Tubbo's apartment was on the 2nd floor of the building. It was the lowest priced housing they could find within walking distance of the Hero Guild's HQ. They'd had the option of living at the much nicer apartments the Hero Guild provided, but they'd quickly learned those came with a cost much steeper than the one they paid for their dirty little two room apartment. They'd bolted as soon as they'd realized the apartments came pre-outfitted with cameras. They weren't dumb.

They were lucky, really, that they were able to afford this place even with its lack of an elevator and staircase so rickety that Tommy was worried he'd need to use his powers to survive them one of these days.

It wasn't that the Hero Guild didn't pay well, it was that it didn't pay people like Tubbo and Tommy well. Your salary wasn't based on what you did or who you fought. It was calculated based on two things: years of experience and rank. He and Tubbo each had a bit more than one year of experience. Tubbo had rank 1. Tommy had rank 1.5 even though he'd regularly been doing rank 5, maybe even rank 6 work lately, but people under 18 weren't allowed anything above rank 1.5.

Then, on top of that, they were both hit with what was referred to as the "teenager tax." Minors weren't really allowed to work for the Superhero Guild, at least not on their own. They needed an adult sponsor (which was actually kind of the opposite of a sponsor because part of Tommy and Tubbo's paycheck was siphoned off to them in payment for being mentors.)

Still, it was better than how Tommy and Tubbo had been surviving on the streets ever since Tubbo was tossed out of his house. They were, at the end of the day, able to pool their resources to pay rent and eat every month no matter how much of a stretch it ended up being sometimes.

Plus, they wouldn't be 16 forever. With Dream as his sponsor, three years of experience, and the work he'd already been doing for the Guild, he was positioned perfectly to climb the ranks quickly when he shucked the shackles of childhood. He'd be making the biiiig money then. Tubbo would probably struggle a bit more since his power was not really a combative one, but Tommy was sure he'd also get promoted eventually.

Who knew, if Tommy managed to be good enough and to kept Dream's favor, maybe Tubbo could even quit and get a gardener's license or something. That would be nice. He'd definitely be happier then. Tubbo with a garden of his own. Now that'd be a sight to see.

The thought put a smile on his face as he entered the small grocery store a couple of minutes later. The woman manning the till gave him a suspicious look as he entered, probably because he was an obviously poor teenager with no parents to be seen. Tommy half wished he was allowed to flaunt his superhero identity so people would stop glowering at him like he was going to steal shit whenever he went anywhere. Of course, if he did that, then people like Whippoorwill with his desire to slowly peel Tommy's flesh off his bones to make into soup (Yes, it did sound gross. Yes, Whippoorwill really had said that. And just because Tommy sprayed mace into his mouth one time! Dude was mental.) would be able to track him down at home. That would put Tubbo at risk.

As it was, he had to bear the lady's unpleasant expression as he scanned the aisles.

"Can I help you?" she asked in a nasty voice after he stood there for a few seconds too long apparently.

Tommy rolled his eyes and pulled the wad of cash out of his pocket to show to her. "Buying bread."

"Aisle 2," she said, still sounding like a fucking asshole, but not quite like she was going to push the panic button behind the counter to summon a hero to arrest him.

Ignoring the eyes that remained on him, he wandered over to peer at the expiration dates on the bread. He was trying to decide which option was better: bread that was a bit more expensive but would last longer or bread that was cheaper and expired in a few days when he heard the sound of metal scrapping on metal.

Tommy's head jerked up to see some guy with a giant sword at the front counter. Now, Tommy could immediately tell he didn't quite know what he was doing with a sword, and it was much too big for his lack of muscles, but still, anyone could be dangerous with a giant sharp thing in their hands.

Ugh. Come on. He wasn't on duty. He didn't even have his costume for crying out loud.

"Man, do you really have to right now?" Tommy asked him as he rounded the corner, irritated. It probably... wasn't the wisest thing to say, but it did get his attention away from the nasty lady by the register that he was holding at sword point. Tommy grimaced when he realized she was too far away from the panic button to hit it.

"You have a problem, kid?" the sword wielder asked.

"Yeah," Tommy said, taking a nonchalant step closer. The guy let him, seeming not to register him as a threat in the slightest in the too tight green sweater with a daisy on it and ripped jeans. "Last night really fucking sucked for me. You couldn't have done this, I don't know, in 20 minutes?"

"Believe it or not I'm not on your schedule," he said with a curled lip. The sword had dropped just a bit, too heavy for him especially when his attention was split. "Now shut up, kid."

He took his eyes off of Tommy for a moment to return to his crimeing and Tommy jerked forward, grabbing his wrist and twisting. The sword clattered to the floor and the nasty checkout lady took her chance to dive for the panic button.

The man stared at him in shock for a moment as Tommy kicked away the sword, but he quickly recovered, fury on his face. He lunged forward suddenly taking Tommy unaware as he'd been focused on making sure the sword was far enough away. Unfortunately, that hadn't been the only sharp thing on him. Tommy gasped even as he punched the guy in the face sending him sprawling.

A moment later, a superhero Tommy vaguely recognized, the Boomerang or something, crashed through the door and surveyed the scene. The nasty lady pointed at the man Tommy had just punched and who was getting to his feet with a bloodied knife. Boomerang was on him in a second.

Tommy slowly looked down at his bleeding side, feeling a bit dizzy.

"A-are you okay kid?" the woman at the register asked. She suddenly seemed to be trying to be a whole lot nicer to Tommy.

Tommy breathed slowly, strangely calm. Why, oh why, did he have to get stabbed off duty? He didn't have the money to deal with this sort of crap. At least it didn't seem too bad... Tommy thought. "Does the store have medical supplies, perchance?" he asked as Boomerang stopped beating the sword man's face in and started to put him in handcuffs.

"Shouldn't you... go to the hospital?" she asked.

"Nah, he's as bad with a knife as he was with the sword," Tommy said. "'Tis just a flesh wound." Probably. He hoped.

She looked at him for a long moment. "I..." she said and honestly the concern pinching at her brow was just annoying. Tommy almost liked her better when she was being a bitch. "Yeah, we should have some stuff. Let me... Let me go look for you."

Tommy nodded at her. "Okay," he said. "I'm gonna..." He slowly sunk down onto his knees. "I think I'm going to sit here for a minute 'till the shock wears off."

Chapter End Notes

He's fine. It's just a light stabbing. As long as he doesn't do anything strenuous or get shoved around at all, he should be a-okay.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

This was boring. Wilbur could say what he wanted to about the Red Glider (and he did say many, many things), but at least he was entertaining. This was just *sad*.

The Blaze Lab was one of the Superhero Guild's biggest potions suppliers. As such, it had security which included privately hired guards and a couple of low-ranking heroes loaned from the Guild.

They uh...

They probably should have invested in some higher ranked ones if he was being honest.

Wilbur honestly barely had to whisper to push half of the guards that engaged with them off of their feet. He left the other half to Techno, though Techno was aware this wasn't because Wilbur couldn't have easily handled them all on his own. He just knew Techno would complain if he didn't get his fair share of the action. It wasn't really a fight for Techno though. He hadn't even seen cause to get his sword out yet. His fists were working perfectly fine, and he was half worried it'd be a massacre if he did get it out. With the way they were fighting, Techno would not be surprised if they tripped and fell on his sword of their own accord, and then Phil would be sad, so the sword stayed in its sheath.

Phil, for his part, wasn't even pretending to be interested in the fight. Whenever someone seemed to think about approaching him, all he really had to do was flare his wings a bit and they'd turn tail.

In fact, the fight only last a couple of minutes before all dozen or so of them gave up and bolted in the opposite direction.

"They'll be calling in reinforcements, I'm sure," Phil pointed out. "We should probably pick up the pace."

"Or we could hang out and see what they've got," Techno said. "I didn't even get to stab anyone yet."

Phil looked over at him, eyebrow raised.

"Not that the goal of this mission is stabbing," Techno amended, "and I will do my best to minimize the amount of stabbing that takes place."

"Uh huh," Phil replied. He turned to lead them down the hallway towards their destination. Techno and Will followed casually cautious as they were still in enemy territory, but they were not all that worried. They were right not to be too as nothing challenged them the rest of the way to the main storage area. In fact, it was almost a surprise that, when they entered the room, someone was still there considering everyone else had fled.

He was costumed, so definitely not a lab worker, but he was rushing around messing with things before he noticed they'd entered the room. He froze.

Phil stepped forward deeper into the room, his eyes locked on the person. "Hello there," Phil said pleasantly.

"Hi," the person replied.

Phil tilted his head to side. “What’ve you got there?” he asked casually.

“Mushrooms,” he answered.

“Hmm. Why?”

“No, reason really.” Techno and Wilbur had fanned out a bit, Techno walking towards the left and Will to the right to make a sort of semi-circle with the person in the middle. His eyes tracked the movements, but returned to Phil.

“Stuff’s missing,” Techno observed as he noticed areas of the storage room meant for potions and potion ingredients were suspiciously empty.

“You been hiding shit, Mate?” Phil asked sounding a bit amused.

The hero, because that’s what he clearly was, held onto his tray of half-grown mushrooms tighter. “No,” he lied.

“Fire resistance is still here,” Will said.

“Must have hid the more dangerous stuff first, huh?” Phil asked the hero, with a small smile on his lips. “Smart, but you hid the wrong things. This is more of a supply run than anything.”

Techno watched the hero closely as he considered them, glancing at the fire resistance potions out on one of the tables. Surely not, thought Technoblade. If it had been the Red Glider, maybe Techno would have expected to be involved in a mad dash for the potions, but most normal people had to know when they held a losing hand. Techno thought he must have realized his position because he looked away from the potions to look down at his tray of mushrooms.

Techno barely managed to pull his sword out to slice through the giant mushroom stalk as it careened towards him. Will let out a surprised noise that shifted into a blast that stopped him from getting smacked by a mushroom but sent him flying back a few yards. Phil had been closer to the hero and his mushrooms and actually did get swept off his feet. Technoblade knew he’d be back up in a moment.

For now, Technoblade and the hero both lunged towards the other side of the room where the fire resistance was. Techno’s legs ended up being a lot longer and while the hero had been closer, Techno was able to hop over broken mushroom stalks fast enough to catch up with him. He snatched the hero up by the back of his costume, hoisting him into the air with one arm. There had been no murderous intention behind the mushroom attack, so the sword gripped in Techno’s free hand stayed at his side. The hero kicked desperately, but Technoblade was able to hold him far enough away from himself that he wasn’t able to do any damage. He seemed to realize the futility and gave up after a few moments, breathing in little pants as he hung in Techno’s grip.

The other’s processed what had happened in a moment. Wilbur turned to gather the fire resistance potions without being asked as Phil picked his way over the mushrooms to them.

“Hey, it’s alright,” Phil said kindly as he watched what he could see of the hero’s face. “That was pretty good.”

Phil was lucky Techno had a good reaction time because when he saw the hero’s hand shift slightly, he just barely managed to slap the hidden mushroom out of his grip in time.

Phil laughed almost gleefully at the audacity of that move which seemed to piss the hero off because he started to struggle in Techno's grip again.

"Phil," Techno said exasperatedly as the man stepped closer. The kid kicked at him, but Phil absorbed the strikes as though they were nothing, blocking the punch that went for his eye with one hand as he reached forward to flip up a little strip of fabric on the hero's uniform with the other. "And you're only a level one hero?" he asked. The Guild didn't want people to know what level hero they were fighting, so they didn't make their rank obvious on their uniforms, but they did want other heroes to be able to easily identify hierarchy in the field. So, they hid an insignia in each hero's costume. Most supervillains would not be aware of this, but Phil had been a hero once. "Mate, you should ask for a promotion." His eyes flickered over the kid's masked face. "You also definitely should not have taken us on by yourself." He said it less in a threatening way and more in an if-I-were-your-dad-you'd-be-grounded sort of way, but Techno was pretty sure the hero did not recognize the difference and would not appreciate the sentiment if he did know.

Personally, Techno was glad for the little rush even if the hero's struggle hadn't lasted long. It was part of the reason he didn't overly mind the Red Glider even though he much preferred winning the fight in the end like right now.

The hero didn't respond to Phil's light reprimand for taking them on, and Phil shrugged before there was a soft click and suddenly the body Techno was holding got ever harder to keep a grip on as the hero went wild with his kicking. Phil stepped out of range having just snapped a power suppression cuff around his wrist.

"We should still probably check him for more things that can grow," Phil told Techno. "If he can make mushrooms grow, he can probably do other fungi. Mold spores could be pretty dangerous in his hands."

Wilbur walked over, his previously empty bag now filled with fire resistance potions. "What's the plan for him then?" Will asked with a nod at the hero. The hero froze in Techno's arm at that, tension lining his frame.

Phil considered the question for a moment. "Honestly, he's a little too wily to just leave him to his own devices, suppression cuff or no. He seems like one that'd try to keep going at us if we gave him the option."

The hero shook his head in denial, but Phil did not look convinced.

"Wouldn't be worth much as a level one, but I'm sure we can get something especially if anyone else has seen his potential."

"So, we're taking him?" Wilbur confirmed.

"Wait," the hero spoke, his voice shaking a bit. "I... don't?"

"It's alright, kid," Phil soothed, turning back to him. "Just don't cause any trouble and it'll all be fine. You'll be home before you know it." He eyed him before taking off his hat to plop it on the hero's head. It was reminiscent of actions he might have taken as a hero on the street towards little kids who ran up to him during those awkward years between Phil legally adopting Technoblade and quitting the Guild. The hero's head was a lot smaller than Phil's and it slipped easily over his eyes, a makeshift blindfold. "We should get going. Whippoorwill, clear the way. I'll carry him."

Techno nodded and forked over the hero. Phil was careful to firmly, but gently restrain his arms and legs. His grip would be like velvet covered iron, Techno knew, inescapable unless you managed to distract him. Phil nodded once he had him in his grip. Techno stored his sword back in its sheath for now and they were off.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sure Tommy will be completely rational and calm about this development.

Also FYI there is some complicated lore that's going to start being foreshadowed more and more so if you see inconsistencies especially with the timelines as different characters narrate... yeah, you probably do, and it is intentional.

Chapter 5

This was fucking shit, Tommy thought. He'd just wanted to buy break and milk, but instead he'd ended up having to spend his money on the shitty first aid equipment the little store had. The nasty lady had slipped him some extra bandages and disinfectant. Tommy didn't know if she'd bought them with her own money or stolen for him, but he didn't ask. He'd have plausible deniability if anyone asked. She'd also bought him a bus ticket, so he didn't have to walk all the way back to the apartment. She hadn't even complained about him doing wound care on the floor of the shop, had helped him out even, though she obviously didn't know what she was doing with medical stuff. She'd been a bit pale by the end. Tommy forgot that some people were simply lucky enough not to know how to stitch up wounds on themselves. Still, she'd done her best. Maybe he should stop calling her nasty lady in his head.

Now he was at his apartment building, slowly pulling himself up the stairs. He was able to use his powers a bit to help, but he couldn't get enough momentum to fly up the stairs without hurting himself, so mostly had to take the slow way. He felt like he was fucking dying, though the stab wound hadn't gotten anything too bad, and he probably wasn't going to actually die as long as Tubbo could get him antibiotics.

For now, he'd cleaned the wound with saline, and he knew they had three leftover pills in the bathroom cabinet from the last time they'd needed antibiotics. (You were supposed to take them all, but they always tried to leave one just in case.) That's the first thing he went for when he made it to the apartment, downing two of them and saving the third for later.

Then came the task of carefully removing the ruined sweatshirt (he'd already cut it and the t-shirt underneath to get it out of the way). He frowned at it, hoping Tubbo wasn't too sad it'd gotten ruined before using a washcloth to clean himself up around the bandages the best he could.

Then he all but collapsed in bed. He glanced at his phone and saw that his shift was set to start in under two hours. He couldn't afford to not go in for the day, but he also didn't think he'd be able to walk to headquarters, let alone work. He'd have to call in. Maybe they'd be willing to put him on half pay for desk duty until moving didn't feel like being stabbed again. It wouldn't be the best financially, but he and Tubbo had survived worse.

He needed to call into HQ. God... he really did not want to have to tell Dream about this. He was contemplating just simply not doing that and going to sleep. He could blame it on the blood loss.

Yeah, that wouldn't go over well. Just as he was about to give in and dial the number, there was a soft beep.

Tommy froze and looked at his wrist. It was something they'd gotten down in The Pit before escaping out of the barrier. Most people on the surface wouldn't recognize it and they'd hidden it under weaved together yarn in the shape of bracelets just in case ('Friendship bracelets!' Tubbo had enthused. 'Clingy bastard,' Tommy had replied with an eyeroll.) It was a simple spell that appeared as a red mark on both of their wrists. If either of them were in danger, they just had to squeeze their fists in a certain pattern and it would beep and glow on the other one's wrist.

Which was what it was doing now.

He was out of the bed the next moment. His wound protested, but Tommy shoved aside the pain. There were more important things going on. Tubbo was on his superhero shift and he'd just pressed

their panic button.

He was on a *superhero shift* and he'd just pressed their *panic button*!

Tommy could barely breathe as he grabbed his superhero costume and pulled the red fabric over his head. He felt the motion pull at his stitches and tried to go a bit slower, but ultimately it didn't matter right now. He pulled on the matching pants and slapped on his mask before bolting out of the apartment. He didn't bother to take the steps, hopping over the railing and hitting the ground probably a little too hard even while using his powers.

He didn't even remember 90% of the trip by the time he busted into the Superhero Guild's headquarters. "Where is he?!" he asked the first person he saw. They just looked confused, so he impatiently shoved past them. "Where's Tubbo? What happened? Where is he?" he asked everyone he saw as he shoved through the office, even though most of them probably didn't even know Tubbo by name.

The only thing that stopped Tommy's rampage of panic was Dream suddenly standing in front of him. "Tommy," he said, his tone saying many things that Tommy was very much not listening to right now.

"Where is he?" Tommy asked. "Where is Tubbo. Tell me right now!"

"Calm down, Tommy," Dream said, his voice even.

"Don't tell me to calm down!" Tommy yelled. "Where is he? Tell me!"

"Tommy," Dream's voice held a warning even someone not familiar with his temper could recognize. "Stop this right now."

"No! I-"

He was interrupted by a sharp stinging slap across his cheek. There was a moment of stunned silence in the office. Tommy imagined everyone was probably looking really uncomfortable right about now, but Tommy could not see it because he could only see red.

"Now," Dream said calmly. "If you're done with your tantrum..."

And then Tommy did something absolutely, stupendously stupid. He reared back and punched Dream square in the jaw.

He had just one shining moment of pleasure brought on by the absolutely stunned expression that crossed Dream's face. Then the man's expression darkened.

Fingers gripped his shoulder painfully tight, and he stumbled as Dream just about yanked it out of its socket. To Tommy's surprise, he wasn't being dragged back into the man's office for a private dressing down, but instead Dream was taking him in the opposite direction.

Tommy slowly started to lose his grip on the wall that had reared its head moments before. "Uh Dream," he hedged, "where are we going?"

Dream's second hand moved to the back of Tommy's neck. "Shut up," he said, as the tight grip pushed his head forward a bit.

Oh shit. Oh shit. Oh shit.

He was manhandled across the hall to the temporary prisoner holding cells, complete with power neutralizing crystals and a guard. Dream opened one of the cells and shoved Tommy roughly into it. Tommy's knees stung as they hit the hard concrete floor. He turned to blink up at Dream as the door was shut and locked behind him.

"Now," Dream said with a disapproving frown from the other side of the bars. "You're going to stay in there until you cool off. Then, maybe we can have an adult conversation. Or at least, maybe, an elementary aged one."

He turned to leave then and Tommy panicked. "Wait!" he said, and Dream turned halfway back, his expression icy. "Wait, please," Tommy begged. "Just at least tell me what happened to Tubbo. Please. I'll be quiet then. Promise."

Dream seemed to mull it over for a few long moments. "I don't know how you even know something happened," he said. "Tubbo was captured by the SBI."

Tommy felt himself freeze in panic. "N-no," he said shaking his head. Tubbo was... Tubbo was soft. No matter how much he'd struggled when he was older, he'd been born into a family with some amount of power. A shitty family in the end, but a family nevertheless. He'd been shielded during his formative years from the worst of the worst and no matter what lessons life threw at him or Tommy tried to teach him, some part of him was still far too innocent. It was something in the end Tommy loved about him. He was a warm little life-giving fire to curl up next to on the days the world was the coldest.

Tommy knew plenty about the SBI. He'd been given folders about what exactly they were capable of when he'd been assigned to go after them. They left a trail of blood and destruction in their wake and didn't care who they hurt. Philza was a traitor with no remorse, the Blade was known for how efficiently he could slaughter whoever he wished, and Whippoorwill had described in morbid detail exactly what he wanted to do to Tommy on multiple occasions. Tubbo could not be with them. Especially not when Tommy had been the one to fail to bring them in so many times. Tommy was supposed to *protect* him.

"No, he can't," Tommy protested because he didn't know what else to do. "We have to do something."

Dream shook his head. "There's nothing to do," he said. "They'll bargain with us for something they want or will manage to get something out of him." Tommy's mind spun with ways they might try to 'get something out of' Tubbo. "It isn't ideal, but it's not worth the manpower to fight them on it."

"How can you say that!" Tommy asked.

"I believe you promised to be quiet if I told you what happened," Dream reminded calmly.

"Fuck you!" Tommy returned. "Fuck you, you green Teletubby fuck!"

Dream sighed in exasperation and turned to the guard on duty watching them with wide eyes. "Don't feed him without my say-so," he said and then turned to go.

"Get your bitch ass back here!" Tommy shrieked, but Dream did not even acknowledge him. "Fuck you! Fuck you!" He did not stop raging even long after Dream had left. The guard got annoyed enough that he finally left to go sit in the back office, probably with headphones on.

Tommy eventually couldn't scream anymore, his throat starting to ache. All of him ached down to the bone. He curled up into a miserable ball of pain, tucking his face into his knees and absolutely not starting to cry. He didn't cry. He just had the hiccups and also the allergy count was probably high and, and Gold Rush liked onions. He was probably cutting onions to eat raw for lunch like a maniac and the smell was coming through the walls.

Tommy had lost track of how long he'd been sitting there with this horrible case of the hiccups before he heard a door open. He didn't look, assuming it was the guard figuring out he wasn't screaming anymore. Yet, his head popped up instantly when a quiet voice said, "Hey."

Tommy blinked at the figure in front of him, immediately recognizing him though he didn't know him that well. His name, well his superhero name was Ender. He was Dream's only other mentee that had come to work at the Superhero Guild only a couple of months ago. Dream kept the two of them deliberately on separate schedules for some reason. Ender always worked from 1am-11am, so their paths never crossed, but Tubbo said he was nice. They'd worked together a couple of times.

Now, the boy was kneeling to be level with Tommy. He had a finger over the mouth of his mask, cautioning Tommy to be quiet.

"What are you doing here?" Tommy asked in a whisper.

Ender glanced back at the guard station and then pulled something out of his pocket.

Tommy looked at it, breath hitching. "Why?" he asked.

"Tubbo's my friend too," Ender replied. Tommy was startled he knew Tubbo's real name but shoved the thought away as the boy reached up and stuck the key in the cell lock. He stayed crouched so he was less viewable from the guard's window.

"He'll be upset," Tommy pointed out when the cell door swung open with an uncomfortably loud creak. They both knew who the ominous 'he' was.

Ender shrugged, but Tommy could see the tension lining his frame. "Yeah."

Tommy swallowed.

"Here," Ender said, handing him a phone. "I stole it off his desk. I checked. It has Philza's contact information."

Tommy took the phone and cradled it to his chest. "Thanks," he breathed.

"You should run," Ender said. "Before the guard comes out. Before anyone sees you. I'd teleport you out, but he has a tracker on my powers and would be able to tell where you went."

Tommy nodded, sticking the phone in his pocket, and then doing what he did best: escaping.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Wilbur felt abnormally disconcerted with their current kidnapping victim, and he couldn't quite place why. Taking heroes hostage was not at all an unfamiliar situation. Perhaps in a different world, the three of them would have more conflicted feelings about it, but it was just the way things worked. Assuming the hostage didn't do anything to warrant it, no harm would come to them and they'd be ransomed back within a few days. It was an inconvenience surely, but there was no lasting damage.

Of course, typically, the heroes they fought, and by extension captured, were usually middle to high ranking and older. Most of them knew Phil personally since he'd only quit the Guild a bit more than a decade ago when Wilbur was 14. The oldest heroes were old friends and allies. Wilbur had even helped kidnap a couple of old babysitters. For the slightly younger crowd, Phil had even more of an in. Before quitting, Phil had taken a bit of a back seat from the fighting, feeling more comfortable training the new recruits. Thus, he'd gotten to know the now 30-something-year-olds that took up a good chunk of the 4-7 ranked heroes quite well, and even knowing Phil was an enemy now, there was still quite a bit of trust there. Phil could smile at them, crack an old joke about if they ever figured out something about their powers, and they'd be put at ease. They trusted Phil would not actually harm them, at least not off the battlefield.

This time was a bit different because this... this was a baby hero: rank one and obviously young. Wilbur still shouldn't care too much. Sure, the kid was a bit scared. Oh well. He'd be fine. He wasn't having a panic attack or pleading for his life, so they probably weren't doing too much undue trauma. He was just kinda nervous. Yet, it still settled oddly in Wilbur's chest, a foreign sympathy that surprised him because he'd never felt it in this circumstance before.

It was also strange because Mushroom Boy (as Wilbur had taken to calling him since he did not offer a name: real or hero persona) did not like Phil one bit. Phil had dialed up the gentle to 1000% with the kid, but it seemed the nicer Phil was the more the hero's resentment and discomfort grew. For all of his boldness hiding things he knew were dangerous from them and then attacking them where his fellows had turned tail and ran, Mushroom Boy was still a bit green and a nervous wreck. Phil only managed to make it worse somehow.

Will had finally reached over to tap Phil's leg twice to get his attention, the movement hidden from Mushroom Boy since they'd replaced the makeshift hat blindfold with a real one. He shook his head and mouthed 'leave it.' Phil frowned, but turned around and settled into the passenger seat, ceasing trying to needle the hero into talking.

The hero seemed relieved for a few minutes, but then seemed to grow a bit leery of the silence, so Will glanced at Techno in the rearview mirror. When he caught Techno's eye, he jerked his head towards the kid. Techno looked at Mushroom Boy and then back at Will with a squint.

'Me?' he said with his eyes.

Will rolled his eyes and quirked one side of his lip into an almost scowl. 'Yes *you*.'

"So..." Techno drawled after a moment of hesitation. Mushroom Boy tensed and turned in the direction of his voice. "First... first time?"

A long pause. “Being... being kidnapped by supervillains?” Mushroom boy finally asked.

“Uh, yeah.”

“...Yes.”

“Ah, I see.”

Wilbur could not see Mushroom Boy’s eyes, of course, but he imagined he was absolutely reeling with the revelation that the well-renowned blood thirsty supervillain Blade was, in fact, a socially awkward nerd. Ah yes, that Will’s Techno alright.

Phil had his hand over his mouth and Will did his best to keep the steering wheel steady as his shoulder shook with silent giggles. Techno glared up at the both of them.

“It’s not too bad,” Techno continued.

There was a pause and Mushroom Boy shifted a bit uncomfortably. “Really?” he asked dubiously.

“Sure,” Techno said. “We’ll pat you down, make you change since some suits have weapons built in,” probably in this case hose him down somehow to make sure he wasn’t hiding any growable things, “and lock you in a room we have set up, but we’ll mostly leave you alone after that until the Guild calls to pay your ransom.” It was a sparse, but comfortable enough room for the couple of days people were usually in it with a one-way mirror so the occupant could be watched, but they mostly tried not to be too weird about it.

“That’s it?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Techno said. “I mean, it’s really just a political maneuver. We don’t really have anything against you personally.”

“...Right.” There was an odd hitch to his tone, but Wilbur didn’t pay it much mind. They were pulling into their garage anyway.

Their house and connected supervillain lair was a ways out from the city in the middle of a forest. It was very much secluded and difficult to get to, but even if someone managed to stumble across it, it was hard to tell from the outside that it was anything more than a nice, normal house. You had to go into the basement to figure out anything was strange. Of course, the basement was exactly where they were going. Wilbur put the car into park and pressed a button. Mushroom Boy jerked when the car started moving in an unfamiliar direction, namely down, as the floor lowered.

Phil continued to be quiet as they exited the car, but Wilbur opened the car door for Mushroom Boy. “Alright, come on.” He was actually surprised by the gentles of his own voice; he’d have sworn he’d been going for casually neutral. What was it about this kid? Or was Phil just finally rubbing off on him?

Mushroom Boy cautiously felt his way out of the car and to his feet as Techno rounded the back.

Techno touched the hero’s shoulder and the kid flinched. “Just helping you get where you’re going,” Techno informed him, and he relaxed a touch. At least he did before he just about launched himself onto the ceiling as a ringtone pierced through the air. To be fair, Wilbur jumped a bit too. This was why Wilbur had songs for his ringtones instead of the horrible default ring, but Phil was *old* and wanted his phone to ‘sound like a real phone.’

Phil pulled the phone out of his pocket and blinked at the caller ID. “Well, that was surprisingly fast,” he said. “Blade, watch him for a bit.” Techno nodded, but Phil was already strolling into the other room. Will met Techno’s eyes briefly before he followed Phil out into the hallway.

He’d just pressed the phone to his face when Will walked in. “Hello Dr-” Phil trailed off, cocking his head to the side slightly as his brow furrowed.

Wilbur raised an eyebrow at him, and Phil pulled the phone away from his ear, putting it on speaker.

“What was that?” Phil asked.

“I said I want to make a deal,” a voice said, firmly. It was familiar, but Wilbur couldn’t quite place it over the phone.

Clearly Phil was in the same boat. “May I ask who I’m speaking with?”

This seemed to throw the voice off a bit because there was a beat of hesitation. “I, uh, it’s the Red Glider.”

Wilbur felt himself straighten a bit at the name and gnashed his teeth. The man had barely said anything, and Wilbur was already irritated.

“And why are you the one calling me instead of Dream?” Phil asked.

“‘Cause he wouldn’t like the deal I’m offering, would he?”

Phil’s eyebrows shot into his hairline. “And what deal is that?” he asked.

“I want to trade,” Red Glider said without a lick of hesitation. “Clinanthium for me.”

What?

“What?” Phil asked.

“If you let him go and don’t hurt him, you can have me instead.”

Phil seemed justifiably confused by the offer. “I... see...”

“No tricks,” Red Glider said, apparently taking Phil’s hesitance for suspicion. “You can have me.” The serious tone he had been using slowly began to fall into seemingly nervous rambling as he tried to convince them. “It’s a good deal for you innit? You haven’t been able to lay a finger on me so far. I’m very much the Road Runner, you know? That makes you the wolf, yeah?”

“Coyote,” Phil corrected automatically.

“Right, right, yes, I never actually watched it. The Big Bad Coyote.”

Phil squinted a bit.

“The point is, you can’t catch me on your own, so here’s your opportunity. And... and he’s not worth anything to you, so you’re gonna get a lot more than you lose, you see, so it’s a good deal.”

Phil seemed to think about it for a long moment. The Red Glider was right, of course. It was a good deal. Mushroom Boy, or Clinanthium assumedly, was a low-level hero whereas the Red Glider had to be a lot higher to be purposefully thrown at them all the time. He was doubtlessly a much more

valuable asset to the Hero Guild. Not to mention, having him here would mean that he was not out there for a few days. They really needed to get that suppression orb soon, and if he was all locked up, it'd be the perfect opportunity. No annoying little chickens flapping about and ruining their plans through pure luck and inanity. Oh, it would be a godsend. Of course, that raised the question of why this deal was even on the table.

Phil had apparently been silent for too long because The Red Glider spoke again, his voice abnormally vulnerable. "Please," he said. "You can have me just not... not him."

And oh, Wilbur realized, this was personal. That's why he was the one talking to them and not Dream, why he said Dream wouldn't like the deal he was offering. This was in no way Hero Guild approved. He'd probably snatched Dream's phone to offer this. Mushroom Boy was important to him.

"You'd put on a power neutralizing cuff?" Phil asked.

Wilbur expected at least some hesitance there, but there was none. "Yes," he said. "Whatever you want as long as he goes free. I'll put it on. I won't resist you taking me."

"We pick the time and the place," Phil said. "You come alone."

"There's no one to come with me anyways," he said, his voice lifting at the end like he was trying for humor.

They hashed out the details which mostly was just Phil telling him where exactly to meet and when as well as once again warning him to come alone or they would know.

Wilbur half listened so he knew the plan but was mostly lost in his own thoughts.

"Get that shit eating malicious grin off your face," Phil said the moment he ended the call.

"Oh, Phil," Wilbur said. "This is the best day of my life!"

Phil sighed. "Will..."

"I've been writing a song for this exact occasion!" Will informed him. "Well, not this one. I figured we'd actually manage to catch the asshole ourselves not that he'd offer himself up on a silver platter. But I am still going to take advantage of this so hard."

"Wilbur," Phil said in his dad voice. "You can't actually kill him, you know?"

Wilbur rolled his eyes. "I'm not going to make his brain explode. At least, not *literally*. I did however make a reddit post asking for the most annoying guitar chords to ever exist and know how to play every single one. I'm also pretty sure I invented a note that never should have existed between F sharp and G. I call it F double sharp and a bit to the left."

Phil pinched the bridge of his nose. "I am not leaving you alone with him."

Phil had set the meeting up for 1pm at an old train yard that held no significance to anyone but the three of them and far more to Techno and Phil than to Wilbur even though he had been there too.

Phil, deciding to put forth a healthy amount of caution, had flown there as soon as he explained to Techno what was going on outside of Mushroom Boy's earshot. He'd scope out the area and make

sure no one tried to set up any traps before the meeting time.

This left Wilbur and Techno to handle Mushroom Boy.

“What’s going on?” Mushroom Boy asked, rightfully confused since they’d taken him out of the car just to load him back into it.

Wilbur and Techno met eyes in the rearview mirror.

“Your release has been negotiated,” Techno settled on.

“Really?” Mushroom Boy asked. He once again proved himself smarter than your average hero by sounding more cautious than hopeful or relieved.

“Yeah.” Techno didn’t elaborate, and Mushroom Boy was not brave enough to push for more.

They arrived about 10 minutes before the meeting time, Phil flying down to meet them at the car as they exited, leaving Mushroom Boy in the backseat for now. “Everything seems normal,” he reported.

“Even if it’s not, it’s home turf,” Technoblade said. His hand did twitch for his sword a few times despite his words. Phil had reacted to the trade with calculated approval and Wilbur with barely contained glee, but Techno had reacted differently to the news. He seemed cautious, verging on unsure. It reminded Wilbur of all of the other times he’d watched Technoblade in this trainyard. Wilbur pushed those thoughts aside.

The Red Glider arrived about 5 minutes before the agreed upon time. Wilbur had expected him to make some kind of stupid dramatic entrance like usual, maybe hop off the top of a train car or something, but instead, he came walking through the train cars like a normal human being. He stopped close enough, but still a safe distance away from them.

“I’m here,” he said. “Where’s Clinanthium.”

“Blade,” Phil said. Techno nodded and stepped back towards the car to open the backseat. He heard him mutter a warning this time before placing his hand on Mushroom Boy’s shoulder and leading him back to Phil and Wilbur.

Wilbur watched the Red Glider’s body language as Mushroom Boy was shepherded closer. He was twitching nervously, his eyes darting over the other hero as though checking for injuries. The boy’s foot stumbled on a loose rock and the Red Glider physically reacted, jerking a bit. It was like Clinanthium was an exposed nerve that went straight to Red Glider’s heart.

Experimentally, Wilbur reached over his own hand to touch Clinanthium’s free shoulder, nothing near nefarious, but Red Glider went tense all over like someone was holding a knife to his own throat. Wilbur would have felt bad if he had any sympathy for the Chicken. They’d apparently found his Achilles heel.

Yet, apparently the weakness went two ways because Techno had reached up to take off Clinanthium’s blindfold and as soon as he saw who was in front of him, he went still as stone for about three seconds. Then... “Don’t you dare!” he yelled. “Don’t even think about it.”

Red Glider finally broke the gaze that had been steadfast on the other hero, turning to attention to Phil. He took a step closer to them, still hanging back a bit. Clinanthium continued to rage as he did, having to be restrained by Technoblade.

“No funny business?” Red Glider asked.

“Deal’s clean on our end,” Phil promised. Red Glider considered him for a long moment and then closed the rest of the gap. He reached out his hand expectantly and Phil offered up a power neutralizing cuff.

Clinanthium’s voice came out harshly as soon as the cuff touched Red Glider’s hand. “Tommy, if you put that on right now, I’m never speaking to you again.”

Tommy, apparently, looked over at him, meeting his eyes with a half-smile. “Kind of an empty threat, Big Man, innit?” he asked, and then he slapped the cuff around his own wrist. It lit up, glowing softly to confirm it was working. “Alright,” he said, looking up at Phil, shoulders back and an annoyingly defiant still despite his weak position. “Now let him go.” Phil nodded to Technoblade who reached to disengage the power neutralizing cuff on Clinanthium, but paused when Tommy said, “Wait.”

All three of them looked at him questioningly.

“Don’t take it off of him. He’ll try to fight.”

“Tommy,” Clinanthium hissed.

“I’m not doing this so you can die fighting them,” Tommy spat back. “I would’ve tried fighting them myself if I was willing to risk that.” He stepped forward and shoved a phone into the boy’s hands. “Call Puffy,” he said.

“Don’t do this,” Clinanthium begged.

“It’s already done. *Go*.” He reached out and shoved him away, hard enough to make the boy stumble.

“You *can’t*.”

Tommy turned away from him and looked at Phil. “Do me one last favor,” he requested. “Tie him up to something so he can’t try to follow.”

Phil hesitated.

“The deal’s not complete until he’s not in a position to be recaptured by you,” Tommy said, “and he’s not going to let that happen on his own will. Tie him to a pole. He has a phone. Someone will come for him.”

Phil eventually nodded and turned to Clinanthium. Tommy didn’t look back at the boy as he cried and screamed and fought fruitlessly against Phil, much harder than he had against his own capture. Techno reached out to the Red Glider after a few moments to lead him to the car.

“We could put him in the trunk,” Wilbur suggested.

Techno just gave him a droll look as he opened the backseat and settled Tommy into it. He did, however, actually restrain him to the seat where they hadn’t done so to Mushroom Boy. They weren’t stupid. The bastard would totally hop out of a car in a mad bid to escape if given the opportunity, and as much fun as seeing him break every bone in his body because he forgot he didn’t have his stupid chicken powers sounded, it would also be very inconvenient.

Phil came back after a few minutes. He looked a little ill with what he’d just done. “I made sure he got ahold of someone,” Phil offered.

“Good,” Tommy breathed.

“Don’t forget to blindfold him Blade,” Wilbur reminded as he put the car in drive.

The Red Glider was not nearly as shaky as Mushroom Boy had been, and no one really tried to talk to him. Wilbur was pleasantly surprised he wasn’t running his idiotic mouth the whole way, though he did wonder why. He’d expected him to chatter on and on about unrelated drivel like he did in their fights, but the car was almost completely silent the whole ride home.

It did not put a damper on Wilbur’s ecstatic mood whatsoever. He was going to make the little bastard suffer, and he couldn’t *wait*.

He pulled into the garage and they descended once again into their supervillain lair and goodness did it feel like an actual evil lair today with all of the thoughts going through Wilbur’s head.

He was practically skipping as Technoblade led the blindfolded man down the hall to what they’d dubbed the ‘receiving room.’ It’s where they usually checked hostages for weapons and made them change before taking them deeper into the more secure parts of the underground compound.

Phil left them at the door with no more explanation than, “I need to make a phone call.” He shot a meaningful look at Techno who inclined his head.

“We don’t need you,” Wilbur told him with a frown once Phil had left and Techno did not. He rolled his eyes and didn’t even seem to contemplate leaving. “Fine,” he said, leaving him to watch from the corner while Wilbur pulled the new prisoner deeper into the room. “First things first,” Wilbur said. “You can take off the blindfold and then I want the mask.”

He didn’t say a word, but his hesitant fingers did reach for the blindfold to undo it. They hesitated a bit more with the mask, shaking a bit as he reached for the edges. Wilbur could have snapped at him to hurry up, but he honestly enjoyed that he was struggling with the concept of unmasking himself in front of Wilbur; it made him feel powerful. It took a few long moments, but then Wilbur heard him take a sharp inhale and he pulled off the mask in a rush, almost throwing it at Wilbur.

Wilbur looked up to take his first look at the hero’s face, and every thought he’d just been having dissolved into thin air.

“Take a picture, it’ll last longer,” Tommy gritted out after a couple of moments of staring. His eyes were resolutely focusing on a spot above Wilbur’s shoulder.

He was young. Way, way too young. Wilbur had thought... he’d assumed he’d been some sort of mentor or something to Clinanthium which was why he wanted to trade. A parent had even briefly crossed his mind with how protective he’d seemed to be, but there was no way this kid was old enough to be a father. He looked like he couldn’t even grow facial hair. He was overly pale and had deep set bags under his eyes. His eyes were glossy, and he had obviously been crying in the car, apparently silently. Wilbur didn’t even know he knew how to do anything silently.

He also looked fucking terrified.

Discomfort crept up Wilbur’s spine as he continued to look at him. The thought rose from somewhere deep inside Wilbur that he reminded him of Technoblade when Wilbur had first seen him, when Phil had first met him.

Wilbur did not like that thought.

He turned away to look at Techno who had noticed something was amiss and was tilting his head to try to get a look at Tommy's face, at whatever had made Wilbur freeze.

"Blade, you can handle this, right?" Wilbur asked weakly.

Techno blinked in surprise. "W-what?" he asked, but Wilbur was already turning away toward the door.

"I... I seem to be getting a migraine. I'll be in my room."

Chapter End Notes

Wilbur: *has dastardly cartoony villain plans*

Tommy: *has a baby face*

Wilbur: ...

Tommy: ...

Wilbur: ...

Wilbur: And I would have gotten away with it too...

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The door to the receiving room slammed shut behind Wilbur to Techno's shock. What had just happened? Wilbur had seemed way too enthusiastic about having Tommy as a prisoner not 5 minutes ago. Enough so that Phil basically had Techno on babysitting duty. Yet then he'd up and left only on the first step of making sure hostages weren't dangerous.

Well, Techno guessed he was the one doing this now. He turned back to the other occupant of the room who had been watching Wilbur's sudden exodus with surprised eyes. He squinted at the newly revealed face. "What are you?" he asked. "12?"

His eyes snapped to Techno and he immediately bristled. "I'm 24," he claimed with a rather ferocious glare considering the evidence that he'd recently snotted all over his own face still remained.

Now, Techno wasn't particularly good at discerning ages, both in physical and mental development, but still... "*I'm* 24."

Tommy seemed taken aback by this information. "You are?"

Techno folded his arms over his chest. "Yeah."

"Dude, I thought you were, like, 40. The fuck?"

Techno shrugged. "I've heard that before," he replied mildly.

"But then..." Tommy was frowning, and Techno saw his fingers move at his side as he mouthed some numbers. "That would mean you slaughtered the Carbon Squad at 12."

Well, actually, he didn't think he managed to get any of kills on the team of 6 heroes himself, though it was all kind of a blur. Most of the killing had definitely been Will though. He'd been... a bit righteously infuriated. Still, the technicalities didn't matter. Techno had definitely killed more than that at a younger age on his own power and not. "They shouldn't have kidnapped my friend," he replied.

"But 12?" he asked. "Don't get me wrong. I was also a badass at 12... 10 years ago, but Jesus man."

Techno hummed noncommittally, mind starting to drift from the conversation to what he was supposed to be doing. He wasn't usually the one to do this step. It was usually Phil and on occasion Will, but today they'd apparently both abandoned him to social interaction.

"Er, so," Techno said. "I need to check you for weapons now."

"Don't have any."

"Yeah, well, I'm pretty sure I'm not supposed to take your word on that."

Tommy frowned at him. The space between his nose and mouth was a bit red, Technoblade noticed, and his lower lip was actually bleeding from where it looked like he'd chomped down on it. "Do you, uh, need a tissue?"

He reached up to touch his own face and grimaced at the mess there. "Uh, yeah, maybe," he replied.

"I... don't actually have one." There was an awkward pause. "But, uh, I can find you something." He quickly walked to the cabinet where they stored things for hostages to change into and pulled out a shirt. "Here," he said handing it over. Tommy stared at it for a moment, but then shrugged and started mopping up his face with it. "I guess, er, I'm going to touch you now," he said. God this was awkward. He tensed at basically every brush of Techno's hand, flinching a couple of times and hiding his face in the t-shirt tissue. As promised, Techno didn't find any weapons on him.

"You should probably stop biting your lip like that," Techno said, noting a bit of fresh blood on his face after finishing.

"I do what I want," he said.

"...Suit yourself." He returned to the cabinet and grabbed another white t-shirt as well as a pair of light grey sweatpants. "Here," he said, holding the outfit out. "Change."

Tommy's eyes shot to the fabric. He looked up at Techno, mouth set in a line. "No," he said.

"No?" Techno asked, cocking an eyebrow.

"I agreed to let you take me captive, not to cooperate once I got here," Tommy said despite the fact that he had pretty much cooperated up until this point and he had absolutely no clear reason to choose this hill to die on. Almost as an afterthought he added, "Bitch."

"You're currently in a power neutralizing cuff locked in a room with me in a building you don't know the location of," Techno pointed out.

He just squared his jaw and glared haughtily.

"The way I see it, you have two options," Techno told him, "and I'm being nice by letting you choose."

"Yeah, and does one involve shanking a bitch," he snarled with a ferocity that honestly impressed Techno on the inside. On the outside, he blankly stared at him until he saw a bit of the fire die in his eyes, consumed by nervousness.

Techno held up a finger and without comment on the empty threat, spoke. "One: you listen to me and change into this on your own power right now." Another finger joined the first. "Two: I take you to the ground and put these clothes on you myself like you're a misbehaving toddler."

"I'd like to see you fucking try, asshole," he snapped.

Techno watched him for a moment. "Is that your final answer?" he asked lightly shifting just slightly forward without actually taking a step to close the gap between them.

The threat seemed to actually register then, his eyes going a bit wide as he curled his arms around his middle protectively. Techno waited as he swallowed the pill that was his own helplessness, eyes flickering between fear, pain, and humiliation before hardening again. "Fine," he bit out. "Hand me the stupid ugly ass clothes."

Techno offered them and he practically ripped them out of his hands.

"Do I get privacy?" he snapped.

Techno nodded towards a curtain they'd set up for that purpose. "You can use that."

"Thanks," the boy said. Techno was pretty sure he added on a "motherfucker" there at the end, but he didn't comment. He was doing as asked at least, so Techno wasn't going to complain.

He leaned back against the wall near the door. His posture was casual, but it served the purpose of making sure Tommy wouldn't find some way to slip out the only exit. He did tend to be very slippery.

Techno could see his feet and the bottom of his calves shifting around as he toed off his shoes. He waited... and waited... and waited until he started to get a bit impatient.

"Will you hurry it up?" he finally said.

The feet went still for a moment before the boy was spitting back at him. "It's complicated to get off, alright."

"It's a supersuit," Techno drawled. "Not a Victorian Era ball gown."

"Just fuck off and give me a minute."

"Fine," Techno said. "60, 59..."

The boy cursed. "Bastard, you fucking bastard." He did seem to be hurrying it up based on how his feet kind of pranced around behind the curtain, so Techno kept up his counting.

At 45 he heard fabric rip. "Did you just rip something?"

"I told you it's hard to get off alone and now I'm on a time crunch apparently!"

"Do you need help?" Techno asked.

"No! Fuck off!"

"Suit yourself." He either did not notice or did not appreciate the pun.

Techno did not continue counting, but Tommy still scurried out from behind the curtain rather quickly after that. Techno squinted at the person who stepped out into view. Techno had far overestimated the needed size for the t-shirt and sweats. He was tall, yes, but he was also a toothpick and the outfit hung off of him. If Techno had thought he'd looked young when he saw his face, it was nothing compared to how young he looked now while drowning in the white and grey outfit like he was an 8-year-old using his father's shirt for a nightgown. Now, Techno knew he had to be at least 20 considering he couldn't have signed up for The Guild until he was an adult, would have needed at least a year of training before being put on the field, and had been on active duty for at least a year, but he certainly didn't look it.

"What're you staring at Bitchblade?" he asked, voice cutting like a knife. Techno trailed his eyes up to his face. Somehow the deep bags under his eyes had gotten even deeper in the last few minutes and he looked paler, though maybe that was just due to the white shirt. Despite the sharpness of his words, it was obvious he was exhausted by this point. Now he was just putting on a show.

Techno removed himself from the wall. "C'mon," he said gruffly, turning to open the door. He saw Tommy shift out of his peripheral, even taking a step closer. "Don't," he warned darkly. The figure froze at his tone. Techno reached back and grabbed his shoulder, yanking him forward. He came with

a stumble and Techno lightened his touch a bit at the obviously very involuntary whimper that passed his lips, but otherwise chose to respect the kid enough not to mention it.

He guided him to the door that led to the main part of the underground compound and stopped. He pulled a piece of cloth out of his pocket. "I'm going to blindfold you now."

The boy's eyes shot to his, startled. "Why?" he asked, just a bit of panic coloring his tone.

"You're a flight risk," Techno explained. "If you do manage to escape, we don't want to give you a head start knowing where you are in the compound."

He looked at the blindfold and then at Techno. Techno sighed internally. This was going to be a fight, wasn't it? "No."

Techno's grip tightened minutely on his shoulder and he flinched disproportionately hard in reaction. "Yes," Techno said firmly.

He still did not seem like he was going to acquiesce, glaring at Techno defiantly.

"The other option is a bag over your head."

Tommy's hands fisted at his side, but then he looked down with a slight nod. Techno quickly wrapped the strip of fabric around his head and secured it with a knot. Only then did he type in the passcode to let them into the rest of the compound.

The holding cell was a bit of a walk for obvious reasons, and they didn't really talk the entire way. About 1/3rd of the way there, Techno noticed the kid starting to shake as though cold despite the fact that the hallway didn't seem particularly cool. What was... probably happening didn't occur to him until he noticed the boy's breath hitch just slightly about a minute later.

Oh god. He was crying. He was crying, wasn't he? Or dying. Techno hoped it was actually that he was dying. He felt far more equipped for handling that. His breathing started to come a touch faster and he was clearly trying to keep it together, which made it worse because that meant it was real and not him trying to garner sympathy.

It felt like eons before they made it to the cell, Techno trying awkwardly to pretend like he didn't know Tommy was crying under the blindfold. He swiftly typed in the cell password and led him inside the mostly white room.

"You can take the blindfold off," he said. He pointedly ignored the red eyes that were revealed by him taking it off, in fact, he mostly avoided looking at him altogether. "So, uh," Techno floundered for what to say. "This is where you're staying, uh, bed," he gestured to the bed as though the boy wouldn't know what one looked like. "Chairs. If you need something there's a button on the wall here you can press. Someone will usually be in the next room while you're here, but even if we're not, we'll still get an alert. Er... there's a faucet and paper cups over there. Don't try to tear it off and use it as a weapon. We know to look for it, and it'll just make everyone's life more difficult. Uh, we'll feed you. That's... about it."

Tommy looked around the mostly empty white room with skeptical eyes and then back towards Technoblade. "Where's the supervillain creepy dungeon?"

"We don't have one of those."

His eyes trailed back to the room. “This feels more like a creepy evil doctor’s observation room,” he said studying the obvious two-way mirror on one wall. “When’s the dissection?”

That read like it was meant to be a joke, but Technoblade wasn’t sure how to respond with how he was wrapping his arms around his middle protectively. Tommy didn’t bother waiting for a response anyway, turning from Techno to go deeper into the room.

“Uh,” Techno said. “Button,” he reminded, pointing.

He fled the room then, but didn’t leave him quite yet. Instead, he walked a few feet to the door of the observation room. Tommy was already out of sight by the time he made it to the one-way mirror, but there was a lump still moving slightly under the covers of the bed.

Technoblade took out his phone and opened up his message history with Phil. ‘He looks 10. Wilbur fucked off saying he had a headache. Now he is hiding under the covers in the bed. He is probably crying. Help.’

Techno sent the message and looked at the now mostly still blob on the bed, very much hoping Phil was done with his phone call and would be here soon.

Chapter End Notes

Technoblade: Father hlp. Big brother abandoned me and now there are *feelings*. Pls, Father.

I'm really excited about the next chapter! :D

...

(Me? Make most of the things in the room and Tommy's clothes white for dramatics? Nah. What would be dramatic spilled on white sheets and white clothes and a white floor...?)

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy was surprised that the bed they'd let him have was as comfortable as it was. Actually, having a bed at all was confusing. He'd expected a dark dungeon or something, maybe a prison cell similar to the one Dream had left him in earlier. He wasn't sure if the plain predominantly white room with the giant mirror on one side (obviously a one-way mirror to observe him. Tommy wasn't stupid) was any better than what he'd imagined, but at least he had a nice bed to collapse on. He'd pulled the bed's comforter over his head as soon as the Blade had left probably to watch him from the other room. It at least gave him the allusion of being away from prying eyes.

Also, it hid the blood that was already leaking through the white shirt Blade had made him change into.

He wasn't quite sure when he'd ripped open his stitches. It had probably been bleeding by the time he'd been in the cell back at HQ, because he remembered that it'd started to sting badly before Ender helped him get out. It could have been jumping down the stairs, the run to HQ, the way Dream had shoved him onto the hard concrete, or a mixture of the three, but he was bleeding again. He hadn't really paid it any mind because he'd been way, way too preoccupied with getting to Tubbo before any harm could come to him. He'd ignored it the best he could even though it stopped him from doing things like bouncing around and running like he usually did.

He couldn't ignore it now.

The supersuit was basically designed for him to be injured in it. It was tight, not quite like a bandage, but it mostly worked on keeping his insides on his inside and the interior was superabsorbent, so nothing leaked through and even if it did, it was red. Taking it off had hurt really, really bad. He'd done his best to wipe up the blood with the shirt sleeves and had ripped off some of the fabric near the neck to make a makeshift bandage, but it *needed* stitches.

He'd been able to hide it from The Blade while they walked here, but he could already feel blood oozing around the edges of his poorly made bandage. He didn't look, but he was sure it was starting to stain their clean white sheets.

Why did they invest in white sheets in a torture room anyway? Tommy was sure he'd learn the answer, and that he wouldn't like it soon enough. He'd somehow managed to dodge the worst of the worst in The Pit even without a family to provide protection, but he still knew plenty about how bad people could be: the deadly fighting ring whose opening entertainment was tossing 4-10 year-olds in the ring with their best fighters to be beaten to death; Nightmare's void which is where people claim the little scraps of magic in The Pit are sourced by means of tossing the unlucky into it and having their essences absorbed; the flesh museum which was exactly what it sounded like and very, very gross. Tommy had managed to dodge it all even without powers, but he still understood that people were capable of those things.

The people on the surface were usually better, but The Pit was a result of tossing supervillains down there without their powers and then letting the society that bloomed fester and rot over a couple of generations, needled on with a few limited sources of magic. Which meant the capacity for all of that horribleness had and probably still did exist even here.

He could see Whippoorwill coming up with something crazy like wanting white sheets so they could be stained in blood like abstract art pieces. They probably had a whole hall of them framed and hanging up from past heroes. The Blade apparently liked chanting about blood when he fought, so Tommy could totally see it.

Well, he thought, if that were the case, he was giving them a nice head start the their latest art piece. Or they'd be pissed he'd ruined it.

He had thought about mentioning the stab wound to Blade, but that seemed like a horrible idea all around. At best, he'd probably just shrug it off since their job was half done. At worst, they'd chose to sew him up because they wanted the chance to inflict their own damage before killing him. Maybe if they dallied long enough before starting whatever they had planned (which might be possible since they'd just thrown him in here and left him alone), he'd manage to bleed to death before they noticed and cheat them out of their plans. That'd be a sort of win, right?

That...that was a terrifying thought. He took a shuddering breath and clenched his hands in the bedsheet. All of this was very, very scary and he hadn't had much of a chance to really think about it yet. He'd mostly been working on instinct since he'd learned about Tubbo and hadn't thought about the consequences to himself. He was... he was going to die, wasn't he? Unless by some miracle he managed to escape this room, this huge liar, and whatever dangers lay outside considering he could tell they were far from the city by the noises in the car all with a bleeding stab wound, he was going to die. Now it was just a matter of how painful it was going to be.

Tubbo would be alright though and that made it okay. Apparently, he and Ender were close anyway so he wouldn't even be alone. That was... that was good.

He curled up the best he could without hurting himself more. He'd been cold since changing clothes and was getting tired despite the situation. He clenched his eyes closed, doing his best to not think about what was to come.

He didn't know how long he laid there before he heard the sound of a door opening. He curled tighter into himself, his wound stinging as he did so and kept his eyes closed. He held his breath like he thought no one could see him if he didn't breathe as footsteps came closer.

"Hey there," a voice said: Philza, Tommy identified. Tommy didn't answer. "I thought you might be hungry," he said after a few seconds of silence. "You probably didn't get lunch if you were worried about Clinanthium, yeah?" That was true. He definitely did not have lunch between the stabbing and saving Tubbo. He hadn't even realized it with all of the other things on his mind, but he did feel a bit hungry.

Tommy bit his lip and tasted copper. "It drugged?" he asked.

"No, it's not drugged," Philza assured. "Just some normal mac and cheese."

It was probably drugged. They also probably had needles waiting for him if he didn't eat it. He might as well get something in his stomach for the deal. He nodded and, ever so slowly, uncurled himself and sat up, being sure to keep the thick comforter over most of his body since he could feel that the sheet already had plenty of sticky blood on it. He blinked away the spots that appeared in his vision when he moved to see Philza was holding a tray with a good-sized bowl and a clear cup of water on it.

Philza offered it with a smile and Tommy reached out to grab it, settling it into his lap when it was handed over. Philza took the water glass and set it on a small table next to the bed so it wouldn't spill.

Tommy reached for the spoon. He'd normally eat mac and cheese with a fork, but he did not suspect Philza was an idiot, so he did ask for one.

It was... not the mac and cheese Tommy was used to. He was used to the bright orange watery cheese and little spiral shaped noodles that he and Tubbo made from the box. This was more of a creamy light-yellow sauce with elbow shaped noodles and some sort of crumbly bits on top. He took a cautious bite; his hand shook a bit as he brought it to his mouth. Philza's eyes seemed to narrow in on the sign of weakness, but he didn't say anything, taking a seat in one of the chairs nearby.

The food was... weird. Not bad, just weird. It was a lot heavier than he was used to. Mac and cheese was usually a Tommy had a training session with Dream and could barely get out of bed, but would prefer immediate Tubbo cuddles when he got home instead of having to wait for Tubbo to cook them something first kind of meal. This, on the other hand was, like, food food.

He took a few more bites, and decided he liked it. It was really cheesy and the crunchy bits on top gave it a nice texture. But, at the same time...

"I think that's... all I can eat," Tommy said after maybe a dozen bites. Philza looked at him and then at the bowl. "It's a little rich," Tommy explained, hoping he wasn't mad. He assumed if it was drugged that he'd eaten enough of whatever it was laced with by now, but would Philza be pissed if he hadn't?

Philza tilted his head. Between that and the wings folded on his back, he looked a bit like a bird, Tommy thought amused. Birdza.

"Birdza?" Philza questioned. Oops. Filter, Tommy, filter. Remember what Tubbo tried so very hard to teach you. He was just so tired though and filters were *hard* when your head felt like it was stuffed with cotton.

"S-sorry," Tommy said. "Words just..." he waved his hand, "happen sometimes."

"It's alright," he said. "Just don't mention the name to Whiperwill. He'll latch onto it, make an entire song about 'birdza,' and be annoying as fuck."

Tommy shot him a thumbs up, and the tray almost slipped out of his lap. Philza leaned forward to catch it and Tommy flinched at how fast he was able to move.

Philza took the tray away, a bit of a frown on his face. "Need some water?"

Tommy nodded and Philza turned to set the tray on the nightstand before grabbing the glass of water.

"Here," he said, handing it to Tommy. Tommy brought it to his lips but spilled far more of it than he managed to drink with how his whole body was slightly quaking. Philza reached out a hand to help steady the glass. It was a bit humiliating, but it did let Tommy get a bit more water down his parched throat. He took the glass back after Tommy pulled away and settled it back on the table before turning back to him with searching eyes. "Are you alright?" he asked.

No. He was not alright. He was very not alright. Everything hurt so badly, and they were going to hurt him so much more. Why did Philza's voice have to curl into fake sympathy? Why did, without even seeming to think about it, his thumb come up to gently wipe away a bit of the wetness on Tommy's face that was totally from the glass of water even though it landed far above his mouth.

Tommy looked up at him in confusion and he seemed to realize what he'd done. He was touching Tommy, his hand hot against Tommy's frigid skin and his touch as gentle as a feather. Ha bird. Feathers. Bird. What was Tommy thinking about?

"Sorry." The warmth moved away from Tommy's face, leaving him colder than before and a whimper left Tommy's mouth. There was a moment's pause and then the warmth returned. "I-it's okay," said a voice softly. Philza. Tommy was scared of Philza. Philza was big and smart and always calm even when fighting. He feared nothing. He didn't even wear a mask, something that everyone did, even Dream. He had superstrength, but he didn't crush Tommy's skull in his palm when Tommy leaned into it. A different hand touched the top of his head, running through his hair softly. "Hush," he said, probably because some horrible noise he couldn't control was pouring out of Tommy's mouth.

It was nice, Tommy thought, the soft way he was cupping Tommy's cheek with calloused fingers, and so warm too. He shivered. When was the last time someone had treated him as gently as this? Baring Tubbo, of course, whose hands sometimes felt like an extension of Tommy's own.

It was definitely a trick: something to make it worse when they turned on him or because the man wanted something he knew he couldn't get as easily by force. Yet, it was also so warm and gentle. Tommy had grown colder and colder over the last few minutes without his entire body covered by the blankets. Was it really so bad to just accept it? Especially knowing that it was a trick. It's not like he was playing into his hands. This way it was almost like he was scamming affection out of the man. Yeah, yeah, Tommy was winning in the little way he could at this point by leaning into the touch, by drooping and leaning his head onto the man's shoulder. Hmm, yeah, he'd definitely been drugged.

"Mate, seriously, are you okay?" The voice laced with something warm and almost concerned settled pleasantly in Tommy's chest.

Tommy hummed back, his hand gripping at the edges of the man's shirt. He was so cold. Why did they keep this place so freezing?

"Alright," the man said with a soft chuckle. "I think maybe you're a bit sleep deprived? Are you tired?"

Why was he acting surprised; this was the drugs wasn't it?

The man stroked his fingers softly through his hair again. When Tommy didn't try to respond at all, he shifted a bit under him. "Why don't we get you settled into bed," he suggested. He pulled away slightly and Tommy whined softly at the loss. The hand came back to pat him on the head as the sheets rustled around him. "Let's..." Philza trailed off abruptly. "Is that *blood*."

Tommy's eyes popped open. Oh right, he'd forgotten about that.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact, the next chapter is titled Phil-AHHHH in my drafts.

(Also for people who have read my other stuff. Yes. Mac and cheese angst again. It is my brand and I cannot be stopped.)

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

I have no self-control, but also you're probably not getting any more until Monday at the earliest, so have a second chapter today.

There are needles, drugs, and medical things in this chapter fyi. This stuff starts at "He is biting me now," and goes to "A hand fell on Phil's shoulder."

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Adrenaline once again proved itself to be one hell of a drug, because the moment Phil brought attention to Tommy's wound, the boy went from sleepy, cuddly kitten to injured, cornered wildcat. It was simultaneously less and more worrying. Less because it had been strange and confusing behavior coming from the usual rather boastful superhero. More because that was a lot of blood in the sheets and the little fucker wasn't letting him get close enough to see why and was possibly injuring himself more in the process.

"Tommy," Phil said in exasperation. The boy looked like a murder victim in the white blood covered outfit, didn't have his powers, and was locked in a room with him, but he was also fucking fast even injured and smart enough to know if Phil managed to lay a hand on him, that was the end of it. Phil took the time to mash the 'get the fuck here' button on his watch while trying to back Tommy into a corner. Tommy was not having any of that, however, weaving around the couple of chairs and the bed while matching every one of his steps. "Calm down, I just want to see it."

"Fuck you!" Tommy responded. Fantastic.

"Mate..."

"I'm your prisoner, not your slave. I don't gotta do what you say!"

"You are literally bleeding all over my floor."

"And you. Are. A. Bitch!"

Phil understood why Will wanted to throttle this kid.

As though his thoughts had summoned him, the door to the cell beeped and then started to open. Phil put his body between Tommy and the door when he saw him notice the noise. The last thing they needed was for him to get out of the room when Phil couldn't even catch him in it.

"What the fuck?" Will said immediately on entry, seeing the red stained twisted bedsheets half on the floor, the trails of blood all over the tile from where Tommy had been weaving back and forth across the room and the bloody handprint on the wall next to Phil's head.

"Close the door," Phil ordered. Will did and it clicked, autolocking behind him.

"What the fuck?" Will repeated.

“If you even think about opening your bitch mouth, I’m going to start stabbing shit. I will stab you. I will stab you in the face.”

“Does he have a knife?!” Wilbur asked, alarmed and completely confused.

“No, he doesn’t have a knife.”

“I do have a knife,” Tommy claimed. “It’s a huge knife, and if you come anywhere near me or try to use your stupid screamy powers on me, I will bring it out and use it!”

“Tommy, I just want to help you,” said Phil with a frown. He was half hidden behind a chair, his eyes bopping between the two of them. His hand had come out to steady himself with the back of the chair since he was fucking woozy with blood loss. It left an imprint of red on the fabric.

Luckily, the door beeped again, and Technoblade entered the room. Wilbur was still standing in front of the door, so Tommy didn’t have a chance to bolt. Will reached over to close the door behind him. Techno’s eyes took in the scene for a moment and then met eyes with Phil. As always, Techno immediately knew exactly what Phil needed and was prepared to provide.

He turned to Tommy. “You are going to come over here, or I am going to come get you,” he informed Tommy.

To the credit of Tommy’s survival instincts, his eyes did widen, and he paused for a long moment. And yet... “Fucking try it asshole.”

He took a stumbling step away from the chair ready to play the same game of ring around the rosy with Techno as he’d done with Phil, but Technoblade simply hopped onto the seat and then over the back of it to land in front of him in two swift movements. Tommy went to scramble away, but Techno snagged his arm. The boy came around swinging, but Techno didn’t even have to dodge because it went wide.

Techno swept him off his feet eliciting a squeak of protest somewhere between indignant and in pain. Phil winced, but it got the job done.

Techno easily carried him over to the bed despite him still trying to fight. He set him down and pinned him with one arm over the chest. Techno then looked over at Phil expectantly.

Phil blinked and then was over at the bedside a second later. Tommy was still cursing them out and fighting, but his movements were getting more sluggish by the moment.

Now that he was finally relatively still, it was clear where the blood was coming from since the entire right side of his torso was soaked. Phil reached out and carefully peeled the once white shirt away from it. There was a piece of fabric tied around his waist, covering the wound, though if it had been red before or not could not be discerned.

He was trying to figure out the best way to get that off when a hand with a pair of scissors came into view. Phil looked over to see Wilbur digging through the first aid bag already. There was one stored in the observation room next door and he must have slipped in to grab it without them noticing.

Phil took the scissors and quickly snipped through the fabric to access the wound. He recognized what it was immediately: a stab wound. It wasn’t horribly long, and Phil knew it probably looked worse than it actually was because of the blood considering Tommy was still conscious and had been putting up a fight a moment ago, but it still made him freeze.

Wilbur nudged him out of the way to get a look for himself. “He’s not going to die,” Wilbur reassured Phil after a moment, but then pressed his lips together to peer up at the pinned boy’s face. “Despite his best efforts.”

The boy hissed and seemed to remember that while his upper half was restrained, his legs still worked.

“Little fucker!” Wilbur spat as he jumped away from the foot aiming at his face. “You know, I was going to ask if you wanted to be numbed or put under, but I don’t trust you to keep still.”

“He is biting me now,” Techno notified them blankly. He used his free arm to press his forehead back into the bed.

“I’ll get the needles,” Wilbur said. He pushed Phil again, leading him to take a step back from the bed.

He could hear Tommy saying something to Techno but it turned to a garbled mess in Phil’s ears. His eyes tracked Wilbur as he sifted through the medical bag to find the needles and drugs he needed. Wilbur knew what he was doing around medical stuff far more than Phil or Techno. Learning how to prevent death had been a bit of a special interest to him for decades. He knew plenty about wounds and how to fix them. Techno moved to hold one of Tommy’s arm down and the needle went in.

Wilbur had been scared of needles when he was 7. Things had changed.

It didn’t take long for Tommy’s body to still. Except for the breathing. Still breathing. Wilbur was already back digging in the med bag as Techno stood up straight, no longer needing to keep the boy from struggling.

“Uh... Phil?” Techno asked.

Will’s eyes flashed to Phil, and he paused in his gathering of medical equipment, seeing more than most people ever could. Most of his existence was spent just observing after all. “Techno, get him out of here.”

Techno hesitated. “Don’t you need...”

“I can handle a suture on my own,” Will said. “Bastard’ll be fine. Go.”

A hand fell on Phil’s shoulder and Phil looked up. Techno was taller than him. He’d been right, drinking coffee as a child hadn’t stunted his growth at all. He didn’t quite realize his feet were going anywhere until a door snapped shut behind him.

There was silence.

“Who’d you call?” Techno asked.

“Hmmm?”

“The phone call, Phil. You went to make a phone call earlier.”

“Oh,” Phil said. “Puffy.”

“Wanted to make sure Clinanthium got back alright?”

“Yeah.”

“And?”

“Yeah,” Phil said. “Yeah, she’d already picked him up.” He and The Captain had been friends back in the day. They were still friends in a way. He’d offered her a place with them again at the end of the phone call and she’d refused once more, but there’d been more hesitation this time. She’d asked about the Red Glider. He guessed he’d lied to her when he’d said he was fine.

“Phil?”

“Why the fuck was he bleeding, Technoblade?”

Techno leaned against the wall and frowned at him. “If you’re asking if it happened here,” he said, “Obviously not. You could see it’d already been sewn up once before. He ripped his stitches. I had eyes on him the whole time and there wasn’t anything that could’ve made them rip, so he must have pulled it before he got here.”

“He changed clothes,” Phil said.

“I didn’t watch him,” Techno explained. “He was wearing red before so none of us saw and then he probably couldn’t bleed enough before getting here to notice. Then he was under the bed covers.”

“But why would he hide it?” Phil asked.

“It’s a weakness,” Techno said without hesitation, as though he knew. As though it made perfect sense really. “He’s probably worried it’ll be used against him.”

And Phil forgot sometimes after having fought back-to-back with him for so many years, after watching how Will could cajole him with puppy dog eyes into letting him play with his hair until he inevitably fell asleep on the delighted man’s lap, after all the times he’d fallen asleep on the couch and didn’t stir when Phil carried him to his room, after all the experiments he patiently let Will do on him with his voice, he forgot that Techno *did* know. He knew what it was like not to trust people to have so much as basic human decency let alone anything more.

Phil’s mind flashed back to a fifteen-year-old Technoblade who’d broken a glass and sliced his hand to shit when Phil had been away from their hideout. He’d managed to hide it for a week before Phil had finally noticed he’d been using his right hand for things he normally used the left.

It had been a battle of wills that spanned hours to get the boy to show it to him. When he finally had, he’d sat as tense as a bowstring as though he expected Phil to treat the already damaged skin roughly, to hurt him more for fun. It had been infected despite Techno having done his best to keep it clean on his own and he’d had to lance it before sewing it back up and providing antibiotics. It had been a horribly emotionally taxing experience that he had not wanted to repeat ever.

Yet here he was again.

God. Tommy had been shaky and pale and he looked like a *child*. And he’d leaned against Phil woozy as he’d bled out from a stab wound.

Here he was again.

“Phil,” Techno said, and Phil’s eyes snapped back to him. “Will’s got him, yeah?”

“Right,” Phil said. “Wilbur is in there and patching him up.”

“So, he’ll be fine. What can we do in the meantime for when that’s done?”

Phil thought. “He’ll need clean sheets and clothes,” he said, “maybe more blankets since he might be cold while recovering, and we’ll need cleaning supplies for the floor and furniture. He’ll need a lot of fluids and he wasn’t able to eat most of the macaroni and cheese, so maybe broth or soup?”

“Blankets, bleach, and broth,” Techno said. “Sounds doable.”

“Alliteration?” Phil asked mildly.

“It makes it easier to remember,” he claimed.

“Or the Blade’s just a poetry nerd,” he teased lightly.

Techno bumped shoulders with him. “Shut it old man. What are you? 75?”

“Something like that,” Phil said, rolling his eyes.

Wilbur was humming when they returned, which in one way was not a surprise because the boy could rarely manage to shut up with or without using his powers. But also, this was the kid he supposedly wanted to drown in a lake he was humming an achingly soft tune to. He was already long done with the stitches judging by the fact that he’d started an IV drip and cleaned up the medical supplies he’d used. Now he was just seated on one of the chairs, one leg tucked under him and humming a song that reverberated through the room like windchimes in the breeze.

“What?” he asked, cutting off the song when he noticed Techno was staring at him.

“Going soft, Will?”

“Fuck off, it’s for medical purposes.” Techno continued to look at him and he bristled. “I don’t have to like him to not want him to die.”

“Is he at risk of dying?” Techno asked. “That doesn’t look like a blood transfusion.”

“He doesn’t need a blood transfusion. He hadn’t lost enough blood to be anything other than woozy.” He did not answer the actual question, Phil noted. “I see you brought a change of bed sheets. We should probably change them.”

Will had already taken the ruined white shirt off of him and used a rag to clean off the worst of the blood on his skin before moving him to the least blood-soaked part of the bed. They went ahead and changed him into a new set of clothing, and then Phil held him while the other two changed the bedsheets.

“He’s very light,” Phil said with a frown. He knew he had superstrength, but that just meant he was more used to carrying healthy, full-grown adults than most people.

“Oh, no, here we go,” said Technoblade under his breath.

Wilbur reached over and smacked him upside the head without even looking. “You were *malnourished*.”

“He would put *butter* in my *coffee*.”

“I like butter in coffee,” Will said.

“If I was going to let you put coffee in your six-year-old body, you were at least going to get some nutritional benefit from it,” Phil said.

“You are both horrible people for different reasons,” Techno replied. “You can put him down now.”

Phil looked down at the boy’s sleeping face and squeezed him lightly.

“...Phil?”

Phil settled him down onto the clean sheets and reached out to carefully move a strand of hair out of his face.

“He’s not as fucking annoying when he’s asleep,” Wilbur commented, sounding royally pissed about this fact.

“Wish I could say the same about you,” Techno mumbled and got a glare in return.

“I should have drowned you in the bathtub the day Father brought you home.”

“Because I’m sure that would have worked out for you,” Techno drawled.

“...Do you want to go Blade?”

“*No*,” Phil said.

“I could take him, Phil,” Wilbur claimed.

“Since *when*?”

“You fuckers destroyed my shed last time. *No*.”

Chapter End Notes

Inconsistencies in the timeline? Nah, we call that plot seasoning. ;)

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy woke to humming. It was a soft sound, but still seemed to vibrate deep into his skin like when he'd passed too close to outdoor concert speakers one time when they'd been testing them during set-up. There was a pulse to it like the melody was a living thing: a second slow and steady heartbeat in his chest beckoning his own to match it. It was... strange. "Huh?" he asked, trying to sit up, but he didn't end up going anywhere.

The humming paused briefly, though the feeling of the sound did not leave the air, instead it accompanied words this time. "Shh, go back to sleep," a deep voice said before resuming the humming. And gosh, did Tommy want to, especially with the soft tune seeming to pull gently at his conscious saying 'go down, down, down.'

Yet, something prickled and wiggled uncomfortably in the back of Tommy's mind. His heartbeat sped up, getting out of sync with the music's pulse. Tommy squirmed, sitting up a bit with his heavy eyelids still closed, only to feel something pushing him back down, keeping him trapped.

"No, no," the voice said, in a sing-song tone that followed the same pattern as the humming that came before it. "Please, go back to sleep child. I don't know what to do with awake you when Phil isn't here." The singing seemed to affect Tommy more than the humming had, and he folded, slumping to the side and falling against something warm and solid. The restraining arms gentled their hold, and he could feel the vibrations of the next part of the song under his ear. "That's right. That's right. Calm down." He was being pushed down back into something plush, a confused whine escaping him because while it was soft, it was not warm like what he'd been leaning against before. "Shh," the voice soothed, a whisper more than a song now. "It's time to sleep." Yes, Tommy thought, sleep. He wanted to sleep. He was very, very tired. The warm hand that soothed his brow only made him want to sink more, though a thought bloomed in the back of his head worried that Tubbo must have a fever because he always ran cold and would stick his freezing hands down Tommy's shirt in the morn-

Something was wrong.

Tommy's eyes popped open, and he jerked away from the very not Tubbo person touching him. "It absolutely is fucking *not* time to sleep," he snarled.

"God dammit, why do you have to be difficult all the fucking time?" Whippoorwill asked. Gone was the warm voice from before now that Tommy had managed to ruin... whatever plot he had going on, and he was back to sounding like a huge prick. He reached back towards Tommy and Tommy lashed out, biting his fingers. "Ow! Fuck!" He drew back his hand and Tommy lunged away. He immediately regretted it because he felt a stab of pain through his stomach. Oh, yeah, that. How was he not dead? He'd was pretty sure they'd been murdering him the last time he was awake.

That didn't matter right now. He rolled to try to get off the bed fast, but vastly overestimated the distance to the edge in his disorientation and ended up crashing to the floor in a puddle of agony.

Whippoorwill swore. "You idiot child! You're injured!" he yelped as he followed Tommy off the bed. Unlike Tommy, he managed to get his feet underneath him. Tommy suppressed a whimper when he looked up at the slightly blurry supervillain menacingly looming over him. There was not much he could do to resist the arms that swooped down to pick him up considering how badly his head was

spinning. "I swear on my own grave if you tore open your stitches again, I'm going to kill you myself before the blood loss gets to you," he muttered. Tommy was deposited back onto the bed, surprisingly carefully considering the death threat. "Don't," he hissed, grabbing Tommy's wrist in a firm hold when he immediately tried to make a break for it again despite all logic. "Would you just chill for 5 minutes you little gremlin," he bit out as Tommy tried to use his opposite hand to pry the grip off his wrist. It didn't budge.

Eventually, the adrenaline wore off leaving Tommy panting and his vision swimming.

"Are you finished?" Whippoorwill asked, irritation pouring from his mouth so intensely, Tommy was surprised it didn't cause a physical blow to his already rather damaged body.

He didn't respond, but Whippoorwill seemed to take that as an affirmative answer.

"Good," he said. "Now, let's make sure you're not bleeding to death."

Tommy squinted at the ceiling in confusion, trying to reorient himself as hands reached to pull up the bottom of his shirt a bit. He flinched when they touched near the epicenter of pain, his breath catching. However, Whippoorwill did not dig his fingers into the vulnerable area or really do anything that would escalate the pain. He peeled back the bandages with deft fingers. Tommy turned to blink down at them. They weren't the bandages he'd come with. Those had been soaked through and double wrapped in a strip of fabric from his supersuit. These bandages were mostly white except for a little bit of reddish-brown blood in the middle.

Whippoorwill sighed almost in what seemed to be relief. "They're fine," he informed Tommy, replacing the bandages carefully. Tommy's mind raced, confused when instead of inflicting more pain, Whippoorwill softly smoothed out the bandages and sat back.

Tommy wasn't sure what to say for a long moment. He bit his lip. "What?" he asked. "Uh, what were you doing to me?" he finally settled on.

Wilbur glanced up at him.

"With your powers," he clarified. "When I woke up."

"It was just a song of sleep and healing," Whippoorwill said, and then grumbled under his breath, "Not that you appreciated it."

Tommy stared at him. "What does that mean?"

"Basically, it just makes your body produce a bit more melatonin, encourages hemostasis and proliferation, and relieves pain."

"...What?"

"It makes you tired and helps you body deal with wounds."

"...Why?" Tommy asked, suspicious.

"Why was I singing it?" Whippoorwill asked and Tommy nodded. "Mostly to make you sleep and encourage healing."

Tommy narrowed his eyes. "Why?"

“Because you need sleep and to heal.”

“Why?”

“B-because you were stabbed,” he said.

Tommy stared at him for a moment. “Why?” he asked again.

Irritation entered his eyes. “Probably because you’re annoying as fuck.”

Tommy tilted his head, suppressing a smile as he tried to make his face look more inquisitive than antagonistic. “...Why?”

“I would smother you with a pillow if Philza wouldn’t be pissed about cooking breakfast for a corpse.” Another death threat, which was really par for the course, but Tommy did make note of the ‘if’ statement before his mind latched onto another part of the sentence.

“Breakfast?” he asked, startled. “How long did you fuckers make me sleep?!”

Whippoorwill frowned at him. “I only gave you drugs that lasted, like, an hour. Your body mostly took over after that. I wasn’t even singing for most of it. You just sort of crashed.” He studied him for a moment. “Your body’s kind of a mess, you know.”

“Your face is a mess,” Tommy shot back.

“You haven’t even seen my face.”

“I can tell by your personality,” Tommy sniffed.

He made an annoyed huffing sound and started to move. Tommy clenched the bed sheets in his hands, but he just was turning away and walking over to the sink. He filled up one of the paper cups and walked back over to the bed to hand it to Tommy.

“Drink,” he said when Tommy just stared at his hand. “You need to keep your fluids up with the blood loss,” and well, Tommy’s throat was aching with thirst. He drank the entire cup down in a few large gulps. “More?” Whippoorwill asked when he was done.

He glared at the cup in his hands. Yes, but he wasn’t going to beg him for it. Whippoorwill apparently could tell what he was thinking well enough because he snatched it out of his hands with a huff and walked over to refill it. Tommy sipped at it a little slower this time once it was returned, watching Whippoorwill closely. He was... rather restrained for him. Tommy didn’t think he’d ever seen him so calm before.

“What?” the man asked, catching the way Tommy was looking at him.

Tommy thought about it. “You are ugly,” he decided on.

His face pinched up under his mask, but he didn’t immediately backhand Tommy. “Well, you seem to be feeling better at least,” he said.

Tommy finished up his cup of water, tilted his head, and threw it at his nose.

“Little fucker!” he spat sounding surprised and also like he very much wanted to beat Tommy to death.

But he did not do that. Hmm. Tommy studied him for a couple of seconds. Whippoorwill stared back at him. Tommy leaned forward swiftly to lick a strip up his arm.

Whippoorwill full on shrieked, jerking his arm away as he jumped away from the bed. He instantly was trying to use the bottom of his shirt to rub Tommy's spit off his skin. "Why?! Why?! Just why?! Why can't you not be a gremlin for 5 seconds?!"

Welp. Now he was pissed. Like, super mega pissed, but he didn't even make a move like he was going to harm Tommy. Considering Whippoorwill often wanted to strangle Tommy without Tommy's spit dripping down his elbow and what he'd said earlier about Philza being mad if he hurt Tommy, it was clear what was going on: Whippoorwill was on leash. Tommy didn't know why, but he was. Which meant Whippoorwill couldn't hurt him without permission.

Tommy felt himself relax just a bit. He leaned back into the soft stack of pillows behind him. Whippoorwill tracked the movement the spark in his eyes going from anger to confusion to curiosity. "So," Tommy said, taking on an air of nonchalance. "What happened while I was out?"

Whippoorwill crossed his arms. "I fucking sewed up your side and then had to help scrub your blood of the floors because you are an idiot."

"Oi!" Tommy said. "It's not like I meant to get stabbed."

"No," Whippoorwill scoffed. "You just walked around not telling anyone and then painted the floors red when we found out about it."

Tommy scoffed. "Aw, I didn't know my health was such a priority to you."

Something weird flashed in his eyes. "Well, we weren't going to just let you die."

And, oh, there's the missing puzzle piece, slipping into place. Of course, that was the reason for the leash. They weren't going to just let him die. That'd be too easy. More than that, they apparently wanted him to be actually healed before progressing at all. It made sense in a twisted way. You wanted to make sure your vengeance was felt fully and not let any attention be taken away from it by random knifings.

"How'd you get stabbed by the way?" the villain asked, curious.

"A bastard stabbed me."

He sighed impatiently. "Believe it or not, I actually had managed to discern that much."

"Sorry," Tommy said, and he might be pressing his luck, but if they were going to give him a grace period, he might as well use it. "I wasn't sure if you had that many critical thinking skills." There was a flash of irritation, but surprisingly Whippoorwill didn't immediately look murderous at the slight. He just kind of stared at him like he was trying to figure him out. Tommy felt himself squirm under the scrutiny a bit, feeling vulnerable without his mask. "Got knifed while buying bread," he finally actually answered, hoping to distract him.

"While buying bread?" he asked.

"Yeah," Tommy shrugged. "Bastard couldn't even wait 'til I was on duty, so I could get real medical treatment instead of stitching myself up on the grocery store floor."

"... You *what*?"

Tommy squinted at him. His voice had gotten all high pitched and weird.

“Okay, well,” he ran a hand through his hair, “I was already going to give you a round of antibiotics since it was a gaping hole for a god know how long. I might be monitoring your temperature a bit harder with that information though.”

“Well, that’s a lot of fucking effort,” Tommy scoffed under his breath. They were really going to waste antibiotics on him? He guessed they must really be all in on having him at full health so they could rip him apart slowly themselves.

Whippoorwill was giving him another funny look, but before he could say anything else, the door beeped.

“Oh,” said Philza, catching sight of him as he walked in. “You’re awake.” He gestured with the tray in his hands. “I brought you some soup for breakfast.”

Tommy looked at the tray he was holding suspiciously. It looked pretty much exactly the same as the tray from yesterday, though the large bowl allegedly held soup instead of mac and cheese. “Is this food drugged too?”

“The last food wasn’t drugged,” Philza said patiently. “You were passing out from blood loss.”

“Oh,” Tommy said.

“Oh,” Philza repeated, sounding just a touch amused. “So, soup?”

“Uh, yeah, sure,” Tommy agreed, and the tray was settled onto his lap the next moment. He looked over the dish with a careful eye and a scrunched up nose. “It’s moldy,” he said pointing to the mold.

Whippoorwill spat out a laugh, but Philza just gave him a good-natured smile. “That’d be parsley, Mate. It’s supposed to be there.”

“Looks like mold,” Tommy said and then looked Philza up and down. “Or drugs.”

“It’s not drugs either,” Philza said.

“Who needs weed brownies when you can have weed soup,” Whippoorwill said under his breath.

Philza turned to glare at him.

“Weed brownies?” Tommy asked curiously.

Philza turned back and gave him a pained look. “Why don’t you eat your not drugged or moldy soup?”

Tommy frowned at him dodging the question, but the soup did smell good, and if it really wasn’t mold or drugs... He ate a cautious spoonful and, wow. This was now ½ off because it was about to expire store brand canned chicken and noodle soup, that was for sure.

“Do you like it?” Philza asked.

Tommy nodded seriously. “The weeds really do something for it.”

Philza looked at him and then slowly turned to level the deadliest glare Tommy had ever seen at Whippoorwill. It wasn't even directed at Tommy and he still withered under it. Whippoorwill seemed to not fear death, however, as he just grinned cheekily. "I agree Tommy."

Now, Tommy himself was not a stranger to being a little shit, but even he knew that you did not fuck around with your *boss* when he was looking at you like that. And Philza was a supervillain. There was literally nothing stopping him from murdering the man where he stood. Irrationally, Tommy felt himself fearing for Whippoorwill's life as Philza stared at him, lips pursed for a few long seconds.

"You," he said firmly, pointing a finger at him, "go upstairs, and eat your breakfast."

Whippoorwill actually rolled his eyes, but he did see fit to obey the command. He slammed his shoulder against Philza's as he walked by and Phil swatted at the back of his head, apparently without his superstrength because Whippoorwill's head didn't go splat all over the white walls.

Philza turned back to face Tommy and Tommy feigned interest in his soup, not risking his life on the chance that whatever kept Whippoorwill's blood inside his body would extend to Tommy. He felt weight carefully descend on the bed so as not to spill the soup everywhere. Tommy glanced up to see that Philza had sat next to him on the edge of the bed. The anger and irritation were gone from his face, replaced by a seemingly gentle smile. "I brought you some hot tea too," he said, offering a large metal thermos.

Tommy took it and sort of weighed it in his hands. It was really heavy. Hmm...

As though reading his thoughts, Philza spoke. "I will remind," he said pleasantly. "I have superstrength and durability meaning that bonking me on the head with that will not cause any damage." The 'to me' went unsaid. Tommy swallowed nervously at the reminder that despite his soft smile and gentle words, this was not just a friendly chat. *Whippoorwill* couldn't hurt him, but that was *Philza's* rule. A hand touched his lower leg and Tommy almost kicked the tray onto the floor, but it was just a gentle two pats before the touch was removed with a pinched expression on the villain's face. "Are you feeling better today?" he asked.

Tommy ate another spoonful of the soup to buy himself time to think about what was the best response to that. He decided to be honest about how he felt for now, but he reserved the right to pretend to feel worse than he did later in the healing process. "Don't feel so much like I'm going to pass out," he said. "Of course, I tried to get up before you got here and ended up on the floor and dizzy, so that may be just 'cause I'm sitting."

"You fell?" Philza asked. "Are you alright?" The hand returned to Tommy's calf, seemingly without Philza even knowing that he'd done it. Tommy managed not to flinch this time.

"Uh," Tommy coughed. "Yeah, uh, Whippoorwill checked on the stitches and said they were fine."

"Good," Philza said, sounding achingly genuine. The hand touching Tommy squeezed softly. Tommy would have thought that with his superstrength, Philza would be the type to leave bruises or broken bones with a touch like that, but the opposite seemed to be true. Even in his absentmindedness, it was done so very gently.

Tommy continued to eat, trying his best to ignore the warm weight settled below his knee. The soup was so good that he ended up eating a little bit past where he was comfortably full. There was still plenty left in the huge bowl, though.

"Done?" Philza asked, noticing him put down the spoon.

Tommy nodded and he removed the tray from his lap. Tommy turned his attention to the tea sitting next to him. He'd been avoiding it because he'd already had some water and wasn't a big fan of hot tea, but he opened the top now. He took a small sip and started in surprise. That was... that was good? He was used to tea tasting like watered down dog breath, but this was different. It had a lot of flavors and was slightly acidic but also sweet.

"This is tea?" he blurted.

Philza raised an eyebrow. "Orange spice with some honey," he said.

"Wow," he said, taking another sip. The hand on his leg went squeeze-squeeze.

"And the last part of breakfast," Philza said after letting him drink a bit more. He brought a bottle out of his front pocket. "Antibiotics." Huh, Whippoorwill wasn't joking.

"I had two before I came here," Tommy felt like it was necessary to inform him. "I think one was expired though."

Philza looked up at him with a grimace. "You are really not supposed to save antibiotics."

Tommy rolled his eyes. "Easy to say when you're a supervillain that can just go steal more when you need them."

"Don't you... get healthcare?"

"Sure, but I didn't get stabbed on the job."

Philza gave him a confused look. He gave him a confused look back. "I think I should still give you the normal amount of antibiotics," Philza said, "but I'll text Whippoorwill to make sure. For now, just drink the tea, I guess."

Tommy nodded and the warm hand that had been on his leg finally moved so Philza could grab his phone. It was a relief because he no longer was diverting 30% of his brain power to its location, but it was also a bit of a disappointment for a reason he could not name. He took another sip of his warm tea and contemplated Philza's face as he focused on the text. He wondered how long the warmth would last.

Chapter End Notes

Wilbur: I want a little brother. One that actually acts like a little brother unlike Technoblade. Please send a little brother. The nicest little brother you have.

Tommy:



He just... he just licked him.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“More tea?” Wilbur asked, leaning against the counter, and watching as his dad bustled around the kitchen. He’d taken dinner to the kid a couple of hours ago and was just resurfacing now. “You know he doesn’t have strep, right?”

“He likes the tea,” Phil defended.

“He probably just wants you to forget about the thermos one of these times so he can have a weapon.”

Phil shrugged, unconcerned. “That may be part of it too,” he conceded, “but he definitely also likes the tea. You should have seen his face light up. Anyway, it’s good to keep fluids down him.”

“Mmm,” Wilbur agreed.

“Anyway, I should probably be getting this too him,” he said, screwing the lid back on.

“You know, you can leave him alone for more than 5 minutes at a time, right?” Wilbur asked.

Phil paused for a moment. “I just... he’s...”

Wilbur rolled his eyes. “At least actually go to bed tonight,” he said. “You didn’t sleep at all last night. You don’t want to fall asleep in the same room as a captured hero.” Phil did not seem to like that idea and Wilbur rolled his eyes harder. “I’ll watch him through the night, how about that?”

Phil pursed his lips, giving him a very skeptical dad look.

“No light torture, I promise,” Wilbur swore. The skeptical look did not leave. “At least not until he’s healed up,” and also stopped looking at Will like... that. The caveat on his promise seemed to soothe Phil’s distrust.

“Fine,” he agreed. “I am a bit tired.”

Wilbur smiled. “I’ll tell him all about the weeds.”

Phil reached over to pinch his arm. “You are not too old to ground,” he threatened.

“I am way too old to ground,” Wilbur laughed.

“Not to me,” Phil said. “I’m still your dad.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Will said. “Go take the gremlin his tea. It better be decaf because he’s a lot more tolerable asleep than awake and jacked up on caffeine.”

“It’s just tea, he’ll be fine,” Phil said, pressing a kiss to Wilbur’s forehead before walking out of the room.

Oh god, the kid was going to be a nightmare tonight.

Sighing at his father's foolishness, he left the kitchen and headed to his room. He frowned when he opened the door. His room had gotten a lot messier as of late, not that he was a particularly organized person to begin with (unlike Technoblade). Random things were strewn about and there was a pile of bags he vaguely remembered the contents of stacked near his closet. He should clean up soon.

He sat on his bed and grabbed his guitar from its designated spot near his nightstand. He idly began to strum a tune. His guitar playing was unrelated to his powers. They worked just as well without it and he had perfect pitch, so he didn't need any help getting the right notes. He just liked it.

There was a knock on his door a few minutes later, and by process of elimination, he knew who it must be.

"It's open," he said, continuing to play.

Technoblade opened the door and stepped inside his room. His face scrunched up an almost indiscernible amount at the mess that was Wilbur's room, but then he returned his attention to Wilbur. "You're not singing," he commented.

"Didn't feel like it," he replied, sliding his fingers and shifting from playing a tune in D major to B flat just to give himself something slightly harder to concentrate on.

"You?" Techno asked. Wilbur didn't reply. "Are you brooding?" There was a tinge of amusement in his voice. "I thought that was more of an angsty superhero thing." Wilbur just shrugged. "Of course," he continued. "Phil does it too. Maybe it's just a your bloodline thing. He usually does his on top of buildings though."

"Mmm," Wilbur replied.

He was focusing on his fingers instead of looking at his brother, but he could see Techno staring at him out of the corner of his eye. After about a minute, he finally sighed, picking his way over the objects scattered across the floor to the bed. He sat down on it hard, causing Wilbur to mess up a chord. He stopped playing and looked up to glare, but Techno was busy shifting on the bed. He pulled the guitar out of the way as Techno flopped his head into his lap.

The guitar was set aside immediately in favor of fiddling with the end of the braid now in his lap, taking out the hairband that had kept it in place all day, and starting to unweave it carefully. He would have been able to tell Techno had done it himself today even if he wasn't fully aware that Phil had been preoccupied with Tommy. Phil was right-handed and Techno left, not to mention Techno had to do it on himself, so the braids always had slight, but distinct differences. Once the braid was unraveled completely, he ran his hands through the hair a few times to get it nice and poofy, letting it fall all over the bed and his lap. It was as delightfully silky soft as it always was.

Baby, his mind supplied looking down at him, his soft hair all around him and his features soft. There were literally only two people who ever saw him in such a state, and it was a privilege Wilbur had worked very hard for. Baby brother, his mind cooed. My baby brother. He knew, of course, saying anything to that extent out loud would change the mood of the situation entirely and, while that could be fun on occasion, right now he liked the gentle calm. So, instead, he contented himself with burying his fingers in Techno's freed hair.

"You've been weird," Techno stated with a frown. "Why?"

Wilbur blinked at him in surprise. "What do you mean?"

Techno squinted up at him seeming to consider where to start. He glanced to the side and reached over to pick up a stuffed bear that had fallen near Wilbur's knee. He looked at it for a moment. "You got every stuffed animal from your childhood down from the attic."

"Our childhood," Wilbur corrected.

"No."

"Yes."

"No."

Wilbur leaned down over him, his voice on the edge of threatening. "I know for a fact you still sleep with a stuffed polar bear, Technoblade, and I have pictures. I can show Phil."

Techno grimaced. "Our childhood." Will smiled victoriously. The glare on Techno's face told him he was toeing the line between gentle banter and being beaten with a pillow until he begged for mercy thrice, so he wisely did not push any further than that, instead smoothing a strand of hair behind his ear. "No, but serious, why?" Techno asked, picking up another stuffed animal to look at it. "I don't even recognize this one."

That was because... he'd bought it two weeks ago. He'd seen it in a shop window and the next thing he'd know, he was leaving the shop, plastic bag in hand and bee plushy gone from the store window. Wilbur just shrugged and Techno dropped it back onto the bed.

"Are you... is this a jealousy thing?" Techno hedged.

Wilbur furrowed his brow. "What? No."

Techno stared at him searchingly for a few moments. "It's okay if it is," he said slowly.

"It's not. Why would you think...?"

"Wilbur," Techno said, "Phil's been in there with the kid for, like, 30 hours at this point, and you can be... overprotective of Phil." Possessive, Wilbur filled in. Wilbur could be a bit possessive of people and things. It had always been a thing with him, and it had only gotten worse as he grew older. He did his best to not let it go wild most of the time when it came to people. It was easy with Techno who was basically uninterested in people who were not Phil or Wilbur, but Phil always had a soft heart and a charming personality. Phil liked people and it was sometimes hard not to let jealousy curl in his chest if Wilbur felt like he wasn't getting attention. It made sense that Techno would expect that of him now that he thought about it.

The thing was... "No, I'm not jealous of the gremlin." He wasn't actually sure why now that Techno had brought it up. It was almost weird that he wasn't. "He, uh," Wilbur twisted a strand of hair around his index finger, "I think he needs the attention."

"You hate him," Techno reminded with a frown.

Wilbur let the captured hair fall back into the pile. "I don't."

"What do you mean you don't?" Techno asked. "Do you know how many hours I've had to sit and listen to you rant about how much you hate him."

"Things change," Wilbur said, defensively.

“How? When?”

“When I took off his mask, I guess,” Wilbur said.

“This is about the fact that he has a baby face?” Techno asked. “Wilbur, I’ve been trying to convince you for months he’s not all that bad-”

“Yeah well, your standards are literally doesn’t immediately go for murder,” Wilbur said under his breath.

“-and the fact that he looks 12 is what convinces you not to despise him?”

“16,” Wilbur corrected automatically.

“Yeah, sure whatever,” Techno said. “He looks young, so?”

“It wasn’t just that,” Wilbur said.

“Then what.”

“He... he was afraid.”

“Didn’t you... want him to be afraid? You kept going on about how much you wanted him to ‘suffer for what he’s done’ and all of that.”

“Sure, but it’s not fun if he’s actually scared.”

Techno stared up at him with a confused expression on his face. “That makes no sense.”

Wilbur flicked his ear, “It does so, shut up.”

Techno narrowed his eyes at the ear flick. “I’ve known you for over 18 years, and I still don’t understand you at all.”

Wilbur just rolled his eyes and went back to playing with his hair.

“You know there are different types of fear,” he said, and Techno arched a brow at him, wondering where he was going with that statement. “I’ve seen a lot of people when they’re scared and there are so many ways they can be. They all have different flavors to them, mean different things. He... he reminded me of you. Not in personality or anything obviously. It’s just...” he trailed off for a moment before continuing. “Do you remember back in the trainyard that couple of years or so between you revealing you could actually talk to Phil and telling him about your powers?” Wilbur’s hand continued petting Techno’s hair even while his mind drifted to another time and place.

“Yes,” Techno said, a question in his voice.

“You were wild back then, but not a wild as Phil probably thought. I could tell a lot of the things he probably saw as irrational or instinct were actually well thought out plans. There were some days, especially near the beginning, where you’d just be unmanageable. You’d say mean things and throw stuff at him. You never did lick him, but you did threaten to cut his hand off once which is basically the Technoblade equivalent.”

“...Did... did the kid lick you, Wilbur?”

“The point is,” Wilbur said. “You did all of those things, but they weren’t for no reason. It was a test. You wanted to see where the lines were, when he’d lash out, when you’d get hurt. He never would have hurt you, but you didn’t know that.” He blinked away the memories, pulling himself back into the current moment where his baby brother laid with his head in Wilbur’s lap. “Tommy tested me,” Wilbur said. “He called me ugly and threw a paper cup at my head.”

“And licked you?”

“I could see it in his eyes. It was a test. Just like what you did with Phil back then.” He ran his fingers through Techno’s hair again, picking it up slightly only to drop it so it fluttered back onto his lap. “So, no I don’t hate him. How am I supposed to hate someone when he reminds me of you?”

There was a pause. “Sappy.”

“Technoblade, I am trying to have a moment with you here.”

“L.”

Alright. Fine. He leaned down close to Technoblade’s face and smacked a messy kiss to his forehead. There was already murder in his eyes before Wilbur said. “Aw, little brother, are you throwing a baby tantrum because you can’t deal with my love.”

His expression was eerily calm when he said. “Take it back now and I will only take 20 minutes to murder you instead of drawing it out as long as physically possible.”

“Never.”

Chapter End Notes

o7 to Wilbur. He will be missed. Guess we'll only have 3/4 for the rest of the fic.

The next two chapters are a couple of my favorites.

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Flashing gif in end author notes.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy found himself tapping his fingers on his knee as he did his best to pay attention, or at least feign paying attention to the magazine Philza had let him read. It was boring as shit, one of those free ones you got in the mail about interior design. Considering Tommy did not have a house, did not have money to furnish a house, and probably would not be living through the week, it was pretty useless to him.

Philza shot him yet another odd look as he turned the page to see some weird couch that did not look at all comfortable. He was probably wondering why Tommy had chosen this magazine out of all of the reading material he'd been offered. Tommy was actually pretty sure he hadn't even realized it was in the pile before Tommy picked it out. It'd probably just fallen out of the junk mail pile.

Tommy just smiled like he was having the time of his life and continued to read. The problem was, while he'd rather read literally anything else right now, he really did not want to get into the reading comprehension level discussion with a supervillain, because he knew how to read! He did! Tubbo had taught him but, uh, Tubbo... wasn't particularly good at reading despite having someone to teach him up until he was 10, but they got by! Anyway, the point was, the selection of books Philza had brought him and even the other magazine with the lions on the cover had very small, very complicated words in them. Tommy refused to spend the last days of his life trying to sound out stupid complicated words.

...

He'd just spend the last days of his life staring at weird couches. How did people even sit on those things? Why were rich people like this?

He bit his lip and tapped his finger faster. He'd felt weird for the past couple of hours or so. There was energy buzzing under his skin for some reason Tommy couldn't identify. He felt a strong urge to get up and start pacing or running or bouncing. He would really, really like to power bounce up a large hill and then control fall down it right about now, and the fact that such a thing wasn't an option just made the horrible skin buzzing worse. Was this anxiety? Was he having an anxiety attack? Tubbo sometimes had anxiety attacks. They didn't look like this, but maybe people were different. He certainly had reason to have anxiety attacks since he was basically literally reading a magazine in death's waiting room.

He was pulled from his thoughts by the sound of the door beeping and then opening. Whippoorwill walked into the room looking far more casual than the other times Tommy had seen him. He still wore his mask, but he was dressed down in a pair of grey sweatpants and a cozy looking yellow sweater. He also had a guitar case on his back.

"Alright, old man," he said without preamble. "It's 10 o'clock. Senior citizen bedtime. Chop, chop."

Tommy wasn't sure what expression crossed Philza's face, but it certainly wasn't enthused. Tommy looked intently down at the magazine in his lap. Yet, instead of making Whippoorwill bleed for the insubordination, Philza just stood from the chair he'd pulled up next to the bed.

"Alright mate," Philza said to Tommy. A hand descended on his shoulder and Tommy went still under it, as confused as he'd been every time he'd done something like that today. Why was he so touchy? Was it supposed to be a power move like when Dream would shove him around by the shoulder? If so, he was doing it wrong. It didn't feel like a power move. "I'm going to go get some shut eye and be back in the morning. Whippoorwill will stay with you and will be on his best behavior."

"Yeah, yeah," Whippoorwill said in response to the reminder. "We'll be fine."

Philza squeezed Tommy's shoulder softly and shot him a smile before gathering up the heavy thermos. He poured out the last bit of tea left into a paper cup and took the empty thermos and the books with him. "Night," he said before closing the door leaving Tommy and Whippoorwill alone.

Whippoorwill moved closer once the door snapped closed and Tommy eyed him warily as he approached. Whippoorwill was the one who hated him the most and, while he was not supposed to be touching Tommy by Philza's order, the older man would not be coming back for, what, 8 hours? He's sure Whippoorwill could figure out something that didn't leave marks in the meantime, especially with his powers. He considered the bag the villain had brought in with suspicion when he plopped it on the bed, but to his surprise nothing nefarious came out of it.

"Alright," he said. "Toothbrush, toothpaste," he tossed the items onto the bed next to Tommy's legs. "Comb, a change of clothes if you'd like, and..." he paused staring into the bag. "That's it. That's everything in the bag. Are you going to want to try walking to the sink or do you want me to bring you over cups of water?"

"Uh, I'll walk," Tommy said. "I was able to make it to the bathroom just fine earlier."

"Do you want to finish the tea first?" he asked.

Tommy shook his head. "It's cold by now anyway," he said, already shifting slowly to work on getting out of the bed. Whippoorwill hovered over him as he walked to the sink to brush his teeth. Either to make sure he didn't fall or to make sure he didn't try to sharpen it into a weapon, Tommy didn't know. He was annoying as hell though. Luckily, he was left alone to use the toilet and change in the small room for that purpose, but he was right back to hovering while Tommy washed his hands afterwards. It was bizarre just going through a casual night routine while a prisoner locked in a room with one of his greatest enemies.

"Do you need more pain meds?" Whippoorwill asked as he observed Tommy wincing as he walked back to bed.

"I'm good," Tommy replied.

"You seem sore," Whippoorwill commented. Was he really trying to push for wasting pain meds on Tommy? To be fair, Philza had too. He couldn't quite figure out why, but he did know he didn't want his brain all foggy, so he shook his head.

"I'm fine. Philza got me some a bit before he left. They're just taking a bit to kick in," he lied.

He settled back into bed, his body both crying in relief because moving *hurt* and in frustration because moving around had helped him feel a little less like things were crawling around under his

skin.

“Alright,” Whippoorwill declared once Tommy was settled again. “Bedtime.” There was no room for argument in his tone as he walked over to dim the lights enough that he could still see, but theoretically Tommy could sleep. Except... Tommy wasn’t tired.

Well, he *was* tired. He was exhausted actually, but he could already tell his body would not be sleeping anytime soon by the way his blood was pumping through his veins. He stared at the ceiling for a long few minutes.

“Do fish piss?”

“What?” Whippoorwill asked. He’d taken a seat in the chair Philza had vacated. “Yes. They’re animals.”

“I had a goldfish once. It died.”

“O-oh.”

“I think if goldfish could talk, they’d be right pissed at the world. Don’t you? Stuck in stupid little tanks and fishbowls ‘till they died. I’m never getting a goldfish again.”

“Uh, I mean...”

“You know what animals would probably be the biggest prick if they could talk? Cats. I bet it’d be cats. What do you think?”

“I think you should go to sleep,” Whippoorwill said.

Tommy frowned at him and then turned to face the ceiling. He started to jiggle his leg.

“That’s not sleep,” Whippoorwill said.

“Yeah, no shit,” Tommy spat back.

Whippoorwill was quiet for a moment. “Not tired?”

Tommy made a frustrated noise. “I’m not sure what I am. I’m all jittery.”

He looked over at Whippoorwill to see him glancing at the cold cup of tea on the nightstand. “Do you drink coffee, tea, or soda often?” he asked.

Tommy squinted at him. “Coffee’s gross, I thought tea was gross, and soda’s too expensive.”

“Yeah, you probably have a caffeine high since Philza physically could not stop himself from feeding you tea all day, and you’re not used to it.”

“Oh,” Tommy said. Now that he thought about it, he’d heard of caffeine highs before, but more from coffee and energy drinks. Wasn’t tea supposed to relax you? “Well, that sucks. This sucks. When do you think it’ll wear off?”

“How many did you drink today?”

“I don’t know,” Tommy answered. “Like 6.”

“6 refills of the thermos?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah, you’re not sleeping tonight.”

Tommy groaned.

“Unless,” Whippoorwill said. “I could play you a song to help you sleep if you’d like.”

Tommy looked at him. “Like what you were doing when I woke up this morning?”

“Yep. I can sing you a song like that again, maybe with some words to make it a bit stronger. I’d be able to overpower the caffeine and let you sleep.”

Tommy bit his lip, but really he could do some weird singing thing to Tommy without his permission if he decided to anyway and it had been kind of nice before he’d woken up completely. “You’d do that?” he asked.

He nodded and reached over to grab the guitar case he’d set down next to him. He unzipped it and pulled the instrument out, settling it on his lap. “What would you want the song to be about?” he asked.

Tommy grinned. “Women and drugs.”

Whippoorwill cocked an eyebrow. “Are you old enough for women and drugs?” he asked skeptically.

“Hey! I’m a man! A big strong man! I’m older than you, probably.”

“Sure, Gremlin,” Wilbur replied. “Oh! There’s an idea,” he said and then began to sing. “There once was a gremlin with a head of blond hair. Whose temper and smell made a horrible pair. He’s annoying as fuck with a nose like a trunk. He’s truly a thing from my worst nightmare.”

“Fucking asshole,” Tommy muttered even as his eyelids flickered, the tune washing over him warm and soft even while the lyrics were lies and slander. The buzzing in his veins slowly petered out. Whippoorwill smiled at him as he relaxed against the pillows.

“So, go to sleep little gremlin, for I need a break, from the words that you spew when you are awake.”

“I’ll fuckin’,” Tommy paused to yawn. “I’ll f’in cut ya if ya don. Ya don...”

A soft laugh reverberated through the air without messing up the rhythm of the song. Tommy didn’t hear the next verse.

Tommy woke up to the weird caffeine buzz again and silence in the room. He groaned softly. Whippoorwill must have stopped singing and the caffeine took back over. Sighing, he let his eyes flicker open only to come face to face with Whippoorwill slumped over in his chair, face planted onto the bed, and snoring. Well, that explained why he wasn’t singing anymore. Tommy studied his sleeping face for a few minutes. Man, he wished he had a can of shaving cream and a feather right about now.

Sighing, he shifted slowly to push himself up into a sitting position while rubbing the sleep out of his eyes only to see a figure standing at the end of the bed staring at him.

“Hello Tommy,” it said.

Tommy yelped in surprise, making Whippoorwill stir slightly. As he did, the thing in front of him flickered a bit, disappearing for a second before coming back into focus.

“Shh,” the thing said. “You’ll wake him up.”

Holy shit, Tommy thought. Is this what caffeine does to you? He was never drinking caffeine again. Yet, the nightmare hallucination did not fade away as he pinched his own arm.

“I’m not a dream, Tommy,” it said, sounding amused. “At least not yours.”

“What the fuck,” Tommy breathed. It was the figure of a man, but the shape was not defined, faded at the edges. It was in a... startling familiar yellow sweater. Tommy glanced to Whippoorwill to see that, yep, it was an exact match except the one on this person(? Creature?) had a large rip down the middle with something that looked like blue ink staining the fabric around the gash. Its eyes glowed faintly as he watched Tommy.

“It’s okay,” it soothed. “I’m not here to hurt you.”

“I... what?” Tommy asked. “What are you?” The more he looked at it, the more and more unnatural the being in front of him looked.

“I’m a ghost,” it claimed. “At least, sort of. You can call me Ghostbur.”

“Ghostbur,” Tommy repeated. He was still ½ convinced this was a weird dream. “You’re a ghost?”

“Yep!” he said. “His ghost.” He pointed at Wilbur. As he did so, the guitar hanging perilously in the man’s sleeping grip began to slip. Ghostbur threw out a hand despite being too far away to reach it and Whippoorwill’s came up at the same moment, grabbing the guitar and then lowering it carefully onto the ground without the sleeping man ever stirring or moving anything but his arm.

“That... is the fucking weirdest shit I’ve ever seen,” Tommy said. Ghostbur just smiled serenely. Despite his absolutely unnatural appearance, his voice and mannerisms had been fairly chipper and kind so far. Tommy studied him carefully for a few long moments. “You look fucking scary as shit,” he informed him.

Ghostbur nodded seemingly not at all insulted by this statement. “Dad thought I was sleep paralysis for years,” he divulged.

“Your dad?”

“Phil!” the ghost proclaimed.

“Philza’s your...dad?” Tommy asked. That might explain a couple of things. “Wait, his name is Phil? Did he really just... add a ‘za’ to his name and call that a supervillain identity?”

“Uh huh,” was the earnest reply. “And Technoblade’s my itty-bitty baby brother.”

“You... you’re *all* related?”

“Well, Dad and I adopted Technoblade when he was 6, but yes!”

Tommy gave himself a few moments to absorb that. “*Technoblade?*” he finally asked.

“That’s his name!”

“What kind of name is Technoblade?”

Ghostbur shrugged. “He was born in the Nether. I wanted to rename him Jeremy, but Dad said no.”

“Blade’s from The Pit?” Tommy asked, shocked. “Wait, no. That actually explains a lot.”

The ghost hopped a bit to ‘sit’ on the bed, crisscrossing his legs and settling in front of Tommy, though he was actually hovering a few inches over the bedspread.

“How’d he escape the barrier?” Tommy asked. He’d never heard of anyone else escaping The Pit, though to be fair, he’d never broadcasted the information that he had to the public himself.

Ghostbur shrugged. “He doesn’t like to talk about it.”

Tommy bit his lip in thought. “What’s your name then?” Tommy asked, “or well, his name, I guess.” He nodded at the sleeping figure. Ghostbur wasn’t wearing a mask, he realized. This must be what Whippoorwill’s face looked like, baring the glowing eyes and blue tinge. “I don’t know how this works.”

“Wilbur,” Ghostbur told him cheerfully and without any regard for his own secret identity.

“So, all of your supervillain names... involve parts of your names?”

“Yeah!”

“You know that’s stupid, right? What’s my name supposed to be? Big Tomman. Wait, no, I actually kind of like that.”

Ghostbur laughed at him, the sound soft and wispy. He was looking at Tommy in a weird way. His bizarre glowing eyes were... doing a thing. He was a lot more chill than his awake/alive counterpart. Almost too chill considering he’d just given him all of the names of his allies... family without any hesitation. Not that Tommy wasn’t willing to use that free flow of information to his own benefit.

“So, I still don’t get it,” Tommy said. “You said you’re a ghost, which would mean you’re dead. But he’s not...”

“I was dead,” Ghostbur corrected. “I was stabbed by a villain who was mad at dad when I was 8. I ended up lingering as a ghost for a... long time. But then I got fixed and I got stuffed back into my body!”

“You got fixed?” Tommy asked. “From being dead?”

“Uh huh.”

“Well then if you’re fixed or whatever why are you...” he gestured to the ghost.

“I have a secondary astral projection power that developed after I was rebooted. He involuntarily astral projects in his sleep now. His waking brain is resting, so I take over. We’re kind of different and

kind of the same.”

“Huh,” Tommy said. “Yeah, I’ll be honest buddy, that makes zero sense, but I might just be tired.”

“You can ask questions if you’d like,” Ghostbur said with an encouraging smile.

“Can you walk through walls?”

“Yep!” As though to demonstrate he sunk down until his legs sunk into the bed but was back to hovering a second later.

“Can you possess people?”

“Not that I’m aware of.”

“Can you use your scream powers while a ghost?”

“If I try, they just come out of him. So, only if I’m in the same room as my body.”

“What’s the password to the door?”

Ghostbur shot him a small smile and reached forward to bop him on the nose. To Tommy’s surprise, he actually felt something, though it was not pressure. It was just cold and wet. He reached up to rub his nose and his fingers came away stained blue. Weird. “I like you,” Ghostbur said, “but I’m not giving up all of our secrets. Especially not when you might go back to Dream.”

Tommy pouted and Ghostbur laughed soft and gentle.

“Aw is the baby angry?” he mocked.

Tommy was immediately irritated. “I have suddenly decided I do not like you,” he proclaimed. “I am not a baby.”

“Itty bitty,” Ghostbur cooed, and god did Tommy wish throwing something at him would have an effect. “Just a baby. You’re not even a legal adult.”

Irritation shifted suddenly to a cold icy feeling gripping at his heart. “How the fuck do you know that?”

Ghostbur tilted his head at him, the teasing expression gone. “It’s alright,” he soothed.

“No,” Tommy said. “How the fuck do you know that?”

“I am usually not visible,” Ghostbur hedged. “In fact, it’s much easier to just be invisible especially the farther away I am from my body.”

“You watched me,” he whispered, a dawning horror pooling in his gut.

“I did,” Ghostbur admitted. “I followed you home the night after our first fight.”

“You...” Tommy said. That was worse than the cameras they would have had at the Guild supplied apartments, worse than the tagging system he’d barely escaped in The Pit, worse than the bimonthly mind checkups he shuddered his way through for work. At least those were things he knew about and could resist in some way. This was... not and it had been going on for months. “So, what has all of this been then?” he gritted out. There was wetness near his eyes, and he couldn’t come up with an

excuse for why it wasn't tears. "Was everything, all the fights and escapes, just a game to you three? You've just been toying with me? Letting me think I've been getting away because you already know everything about me and where I live?" A mouse being played with in the paws of a cat thinking it might live but being doomed from the start. He was always going to end up here, wasn't he? Trapped at their mercy locked in this stupid room.

"No, no, no," Ghostbur said, his hands up in a placating motion. "They don't know all of that. Nothing about you or where you live."

"What the fuck do you mean they don't know?"

"Wilbur doesn't know when he's awake," Ghostbur said. "I've been not letting that stuff through to the waking world. You're okay, I promise. It's nothing like that."

He seemed earnest enough that it calmed Tommy just a tad. "I... but how? Why?"

"How is easy enough," Ghostbur answered. "I just chose not to remember any of it when I'm him," he pointed at Wilbur. "Why is..." he looked over at Tommy. "You were sad that day," he explained. His eyes started to glow more and the dark blue liquid started to drip from them like fast flowing weird tears, staining the bedsheets in puddles. "You were only 15 then even if I didn't know it, and Dream was so mean to you for losing which wasn't fair because you were obviously so *new*. You walked home in the dark. It had snowed the night before, but you didn't have anything to keep you warm. I followed you all the way home and was so relieved when there was someone there ready with a blanket and cuddles to help warm you back up."

"You know about Tubbo too." It wasn't a question. Of course, he knew about Tubbo.

"I do," he said, "but it's okay. Awakebur didn't need to know, so I didn't tell him."

"I... but I still don't understand. You kept it from yourself?"

"The living," Ghostbur said, a bit hesitantly, "don't always see the bigger picture. Wilbur is me. He knows the same things as me for the most part, but he still forgets what matters sometimes. He gets wrapped up in life and gets angry over silly little things. I didn't want to do anything that could hurt you or make you sad."

"I... I still don't get it," Tommy said softly.

"That's okay," Ghostbur replied. "You'll understand eventually." He leaned forward so he was in Tommy's face and Tommy went still, wondering what on Earth he was planning to do. He ended up touching his lips to Tommy's forehead. Once again there was no pressure, just the cool wetness of the blue ink like stuff being rubbed off onto his skin. The ghost was smiling so hard he was squinting from it when he drew away. "Oh!" he said, his tone suddenly like an excited child. He leaned over and reached for the bag that had held the toothbrush and clothes earlier. He was able to pick it up apparently, though he stained the outside in blue. He didn't seem to care about that though. "You should check my bag! Awakebur was silly, but I brought you a present!"

A present? Tommy blinked at the bag for a long few moments until it slipped through the ghost's fingers. (Literally through his fingers. It seemed he could only hold onto things physically for a little bit.) He slowly reached to pick it up.

"It's a cow plushie!" Ghostbur declared when he pulled it out and just stared at it. "You like cows, so I got one for you!"

“I...” Tommy did not know what to say. It was very, very nice: one of the big ones that usually cost, like, half his paycheck and it was unbelievably soft. He’d never had a stuffed animal before.

“And I got a bee one for Tubbo!” Ghostbur informed him.

“He’d...” Tommy said. “He’d like that.” Ghostbur was overtly pleased by him saying so, smiling and floating up and down a bit: bouncing. Tommy watched his excitement with a smile on his face.

Wilbur fucking hated him, but whatever part of him was sitting in front of Tommy now clearly did not, especially if he’d really been keeping Tommy and Tubbo safe by hiding the things he knew even from himself. Thinking about Tubbo and the things Ghostbur knew, Tommy suddenly had an idea.

“You know who Tubbo is,” Tommy breathed.

“Yes?”

“And you know where we live already.”

“Uh huh.”

“Can,” Tommy looked up at him desperately. “Can you go check on him for me? You don’t have to contact him or do anything, but can you just make sure he’s okay? He’s probably... well, you know how he’s clinging, right? He’s probably lost without me. I just want to know that he’s okay. Can you please check?”

“Of course,” Ghostbur said gently.

Tommy pulled the stuffed cow to his chest. “Thanks,” he said.

“You’re going to be okay,” Ghostbur said. “Alive people can be silly, but you’ll be okay, okay?”

He wasn’t sure if he could believe that. He wasn’t sure if Ghostbur could promise that when he was basically a dream, but he did feel a bit warmed by the promise. “Sure, Ghstorbur,” Tommy said to placate him. “I’ll be okay, but can you go check on Tubbo for me?”

Ghostbur watched him for a bit. “I’ll be back in a little while,” he promised, and then he disappeared into thin air.

Chapter End Notes

Flashing gif below.

Wilbur about Tommy for the last, like, year:



Ghostbur about Tommy during the exact same time:



We have fanart for this chapter! [One](#), [Two](#)

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Technoblade,” a voice called, causing Techno to jerk awake from a deep sleep. His eyes landed on the figure hovering at the end of his bed. “Technoblade, hello,” he said, waving when he saw Techno was awake.

“Ugh. Do you have to watch me sleep?” Techno asked.

“I’m not watching you sleep,” Ghostbur said. “I’m waking you up.”

Techno sat up, rubbing his eyes. “Why?” he asked tiredly.

“You need to watch Tommy,” Ghostbur told him.

“Wilbur was going to watch Tommy,” Techno said with a stifled yawn.

“Yeah,” Ghostbur said, “but then he fell asleep.”

“So?” Techno asked. “You watch him then.”

“I can’t,” Ghostbur said with a frown. “I need to go do something.”

“Schlatt can wait one night. I’m sure he won’t fall back into alcoholism and make a deal with the devil that fast.”

“I’m not going to go see Schlatt.”

“Then what?” Techno asked. “All you do is talk to Schlatt and stare at me or Phil while we sleep.”

“Tommy asked me to check on his Tubbo?”

“...His what-o?” Technoblade asked.

“His Tubbo,” Ghostbur said, as though repeating the word clarified anything. Techno gave him a blank look and he started his ‘bouncing’ which was really just him hovering higher and then lower in a rhythm. “His friend! They’re really quite close, you know. Tommy’s worried he might be sad.”

“Tubbo,” Techno repeated. He was not quite awake enough for this conversation. Or for Ghostbur in general. “Tubbo is... the hero we kidnapped?” he guessed.

“Uh huh. I promised Tommy I’d check on him!”

Now, Technoblade’s brain was still in the process of waking up, but something in what Ghostbur had just said struck Techno as odd. “You know his friend’s name is Tubbo,” Techno said slowly. “And you somehow know where this Tubbo is to check on him.”

Ghostbur must have realized his mistake because the bouncing stopped abruptly until he was almost sitting on the bed and his glowing eyes went wide.

“Ghostbur,” Techno said patiently. “Have you been keeping secrets?”

“W-well you have to understand Technoblade,” he started to babble. “It really is Awakebur’s fault. He can be quite stubborn you know and kind of mean, and well, I did follow Tommy home from HQ the first time because Awakebur wanted to know more about him, but you see Techno he was really sad. And he is quite little, just a baby really. Did you know he’s only 16? And actually 16, 16 not like me or you at 16. Far too young to be doing hero work. I don’t know what they were thinking. And he lives in a little dirty apartment and doesn’t eat nearly enough. He and his Tubbo leave notes around for each other because the heroes were mean and don’t let them work at the same times, so they barely see each other and Tommy gets the bed all dirty because he’s always too tired to shower when he gets home, but Tubbo never says anything because he knows Dream is far too hard on him. And, and Alivebur would be mean, because he decided he doesn’t like him very much. You know how people who are alive can be oh so testy about things. It’s really silly, you know. So, I decided to forget about those things when I’m awake. He is tiny Technoblade.”

“...Will” Techno sighed, pinching his brow.

“And, and, you living people are so vulnerable when you’re sleeping. He’s awake right now, but what if he falls asleep and he’s alone. He can’t be alone. He’s too little. You have to watch him Technoblade. Please?”

Techno could tell Ghostbur was not in the mood to listen to reason. Even if Tommy was 16, that was definitely not too ‘little’ to sleep alone, especially when locked in a secure underground facility no one knew the location of. The ghost clearly did not see it that way, but to be fair, he had a hard time letting Phil sleep alone some nights. “Ugh, fine,” Techno groaned, resigning himself to his exhaustion. He reached over to flip on his lamp.

“Oh, thank you Technoblade!” Ghostbur cooed. “You are such a good little brother.”

Techno’s head whipped around to face him. “Don’t start that shit. We are not related! I have lived longer than you.” Probably. Ghostbur just gave him a mischievous smile. “You’re lucky I can’t smother you with a pillow again,” he grumbled.

Ghostbur just chuckled, sounding for a moment more like he did when he was awake. “Go babysit,” he requested as he faded out of sight.

“You stained my sheets blue!” Techno realized when he vanished. “Why do I even bother trying to have pink ones?”

After pulling on a green hoodie that was actually Phil’s and deciding contacts were definitely not worth it at this time of night and thus forgoing the mask in favor of glasses, Techno took the steps downstairs, grumbling all the way.

Tommy looked up from his place on the bed when Techno shoved open the door to the cell, seeming surprised. Techno had to pause at the sight of him. Ghostbur had apparently gone wild because blue stained his nose and forehead as well as his bedsheets. Apparently Ghostbur had taken it upon himself to decide the Will-please-not-the-face rule was not in place for Tommy because there was clear intent behind the kiss shaped mark above his eye. He might as well have written the word ‘mine’ across his forehead in permanent marker. Fucking, possessive bastard. That wouldn’t be coming off for days.

“What are you doing here?” the kid asked.

“Ghostbur said you were awake and that I should keep you company.”

“I don’t need company,” he grumbled.

“Too bad,” Techno said airily. He eyed Wilbur’s slumped over form leaning against the bed. Idiot. He’d complain all day if he woke with a kink in his neck from sleeping like that. With a shake of the head, Techno turned to the large pile of pillows and blankets Phil had panic gathered in fear Tommy might be cold and began spreading them all out in one corner of the room. He kicked the pile around until it looked comfortable enough and then walked over to where Wilbur sat. He carefully scooted the chair back from the bed, catching his body as it tried to fall forward. He made a confused sound in his sleep. “Hush you, it’s just me,” Techno told him. “Stay asleep.” He carefully slipped one arm under his knees and the other under his shoulder blades. Despite the bit of jostling maneuvering him so he was clutched to Techno’s chest caused, he headed Techno’s order to continue sleeping. He carried him over to the corner and laid him out on the pile of blankets, tossing one over him.

Tommy was staring at him when he turned back. Techno waited for whatever thing he wanted to say, but nothing came.

“What?” he finally asked, tired of the unplanned staring contest.

“You forgot your mask.”

“Didn’t forget,” Techno said. “Didn’t want to put my contacts in.”

“Don’t you have, like, a secret identity?”

Techno shrugged, unconcerned. He honestly wore the mask more for the aesthetic and Phil didn’t even wear one. The only one who really wandered around the city and could possibly be recognized was Will and that cat was out of the bag thanks to a certain ghost. The kid started gnawing on his lip again. “Stop that you’re going to bleed,” Techno scolded.

“Fuck you, I do what I want.”

“You want to bleed?”

“Is that a threat?” Tommy asked, bristling defensively to Techno’s confusion. “‘Cause I’m pretty sure Philza said you can’t hurt me right now, and he might be your dad or whatever, but you still shouldn’t piss him off.”

“It’s not a threat,” Techno told him, resisting rolling his eyes. “I’m not planning to hurt you. I was commenting on you hurting yourself.” The words seemed to sooth him a bit. “Also, Philza’s my friend, not my dad.”

Tommy tilted his head. “Ghostbur said Phil adopted you when you were six.” Fucking Ghostbur.

“Legally,” Techno said, “but we’re actually just friends.”

“You were *six*.”

“It’s complicated,” Techno said. “What else did he tell you?”

“Not much...” Tommy said. “Just stuff about how being a ghost works... and his name... and your name.”

“Of course.”

“Your supervillain names all suck, by the way,” Tommy informed him. “Having your name in the supervillain name doesn’t make sense. It’s supposed to be a secret identity. What is SBI all of your middle initials?”

“God, I wish.”

“What is it then?”

Techno looked at him. “No.”

“Aw, but what does it matter?”

“No.”

Tommy pushed his lower lip out. Techno stared at him, unimpressed. “...You look weird without the mask,” Tommy said.

“Mmm,” Techno replied, unconcerned. He walked back over to the bed.

“Seriously, no one’d be scared of you if they knew you looked like that under the mask.”

“Oh, trust me,” Techno said. “They would be.” Without warning, he flopped himself face first onto the free side of the double bed, ignoring how his glasses poked his face.

“Hey!” the kid said, sounding surprised. “This is my bed.”

“Ghostbur woke me up in the middle of a sleep cycle at, like, 2am,” he said into the pillow. “Shush.”

“Aren’t you, like, afraid I’ll murder you in your sleep and escape?”

“I’m not falling asleep,” Techno said, his eyes closed, “and no, not particularly.”

“I’m dangerous!”

“Mmm.”

“Bitch.” Techno felt him shuffle around a bit on the bed. He hissed when the movement jostled his injury and Techno opened his eyes and turned his head to look at him. “Your hair’s weird.” Techno was starting to think ‘blank is weird’ was just the way Tommy demanded attention.

“Okay.”

There was a pause. “It looks cool though when it’s all braided and you’re wearing the skull mask.”

“Thanks.”

“Why do you wear it so long though?” Tommy asked. Techno wasn’t getting out of conversation, was he? “I mean, it’s awesome and all, but your main thing is close combat.”

“Used to wear it short,” Techno admitted. “People used to shave it. Then, I’d cut it short with a knife so it wouldn’t get tangled. Phil taught me how to care for it a bit after I met him. I started to like it long when I knew how to take care of it, so now I just let it grow.”

“Well, it’s very pog man.”

Techno rolled his eyes. “Thanks,” he said again.

“Is it naturally pink?” he asked.

Techno snorted at the question. “No,” he said.

“Well, I don’t know,” Tommy said, affronted by his amusement. “Sometimes people with powers end up with weird shit like wings!” Which... was fair enough.

“It’s white naturally,” he said. “Not sure if it was when I was born or if it happened later. I’m due for a dye, see?” He tapped at his roots which he’d noticed the morning before were starting to peak through white.

Tommy leaned over to look, careful to keep his hand on his own pillow.

Techno sighed. “You can touch it.”

“Huh?” Tommy asked.

“My hair,” Techno said. “You can touch it.”

“Really?” he asked.

“It’s basically Wilbur and Phil’s favorite pastime, so it’s not like I’m not used to it.”

With the permission, he reached out a cautious hand to touch a few of the strands on the pillow, his head cocked in curiosity. “Wow,” he said, “how the hell do you get it like this?”

“Lots of time and lots of product.”

He grew a bit bolder, though he did not take near the amount of liberties Wilbur often did. He just basically pet it against the pillow so Techno could just barely feel it. His distraction gave Techno a chance to really look at him. He did look quite young especially now. Ghostbur had said he was 16 even though that made no sense. What was the Hero Guild doing if that was the case?

Sixteen, Techno contemplated. That was young, wasn’t it? Did Techno even know what it was like to be 16? He’d been 16 once, twice, and never.

Sixteen was a home made out of an old, abandoned train car and Phil always bringing back something extra when he went out for supplies, sometimes these things were functional, but often they were not, and he really did not understand. It was a white stuffed bear Techno never understood the significance of until an 8-year-old handed a much newer version of it to him years later saying he could have it. It was being on the verge of trusting after almost a year and a half, but not quite there yet.

Sixteen was also Will’s eighteenth birthday and Techno pinning him to the ground of the living room in the house upstairs, because he wouldn’t stop mocking Techno for still being a child when he was an adult even though Techno had been an adult *first*. It was Phil ignoring them to cut ice cream cake in the kitchen trusting Techno wouldn’t actually cut off his son’s oxygen with the pillow he’d placed over his head.

Sixteen was lost like water slipping through a drain never to be recovered. It was lost in blood and death: his own, his own, his own, until he managed to make it someone else’s. How could he possibly

know when he'd existed for 16 years when for every stumbling two steps forward, he took one back? Did it pass in the blood-soaked arena or on the cold street or in a prison cell? There was no way to ever know.

What was sixteen for this boy? Techno had to wonder. He worried silently that with the gash on his stomach and the pallor to his cheeks, it might linger somewhere closer to the first or third than Techno was comfortable with.

"Why are you looking at me all funny?" Tommy asked.

"How am I looking at you?"

"Funny," Tommy answered.

Techno rolled his eyes. "Helpful." Tommy kicked him and Techno narrowed his eyes. "Don't you want to sleep?" he asked.

"I apparently have had too much caffeine, so sleep is not an option right now."

"Fantastic," Techno said, shoving his face back into the pillow.

Tommy gave him about two seconds of silence. "Do you have a superpower?" he asked.

Techno sighed. "Yes."

"I've never seen you use one," Tommy said, "and we've fought a lot of times."

Techno took his head off the pillow. "It's not one I use often anymore."

"Why not?" Tommy asked with a frown.

Techno turned to face him. "If you'd ever given me cause to use it, you wouldn't be alive."

He must have accidentally done something with his voice because Tommy's already pretty pale face went a bit paler.

Techno tilted his head. "It wasn't a threat," he said. "Just a fact."

"I could kill you right now if I decided I wanted you dead isn't a threat?" Tommy asked.

"No because I don't have a reason to want you dead."

"You don't?" Tommy asked, seeming genuinely surprised.

Techno squinted at him. "Kid, what exactly do you think is going on here?"

The kid started biting his damned lip again, his hand clenching his pillow, but he didn't say anything.

"You are aware we aren't planning to kill you, aren't you?" He just stared at Techno. "Shit kid, we're not going to just murder some unarmed child in our basement. You'll be ransomed back to the Guild eventually." Well... at least, that had been the plan, he thought, looking at the blue marks adorning his face.

"But I'm your enemy," he said with a frown.

“Being a general nuisance and kicking Wilbur in the face a couple of times isn’t quite enough for us to want your head on a spike.”

Tommy was looking at him all confused. Shit. How had Phil explained the fact that most people actually didn’t want to murder people indiscriminately? Technoblade was not equipped for this. Uh...

“Is that...” Tommy interrupted his thoughts.

“What?” Techno prompted when it was clear he wasn’t going to continue his sentence.

“Why didn’t you kill me that one time?” he asked quietly.

“When?” Techno asked.

“You know,” he said. “That one time I found you in the alley. We fought and you had me at sword point. I thought you were going to slit my throat then, but you just walked away. We were alone and I’d attacked you. I always wondered why you didn’t.”

“I thought that’d be obvious,” Technoblade said, but Tommy just frowned. “Did you forget the rest of that fight?” he asked. “You thought you’d snuck up on me and I didn’t notice until it was too late. You’d grabbed my sword and held *me* at sword point on the ground. You’d thought you’d won.”

“Yeah, but I hadn’t,” he grumbled.

“You hadn’t,” Techno agreed. “In fact, you didn’t even really find me. I lured you there on purpose.”

“Why?”

“It was a test. We’d fought a few times and I wanted to see if you were a threat.” He shrugged. “You weren’t.”

Tommy looked unhappy with that statement.

“It’s not an insult,” Techno said.

“It sure fucking sounds like one,” Tommy replied.

“It’s not,” Techno said. “It’s a compliment really. The first person I ever registered as not a threat was Phil and he’d actually just beaten me in combat. It has nothing to do with skill, though yes, obviously I could beat you in hand to hand considering I wrestled the sword away from you after.”

“I don’t get it.”

Techno hummed. “You asked me why I didn’t slit your throat. Well, why didn’t you slit mine?”

“Well... because I’m a hero,” Tommy said, “and I’d already won or thought I did, so I should just call it in to the Guild. That’s what I’m supposed to do.”

Techno snorted. “Funny joke kid. Most heroes would love to put a sword through my chest,” not that it would end, had ended, well for them, “especially with no one watching.”

“So, you didn’t kill me then because I didn’t try to kill you?”

“I give people back what they give to me,” Techno said. “It’s why Phil has my loyalty, why Wilbur has my protection, why many people are dead and buried, and it’s why you don’t need to fear dying at

my hand.”

“Oh,” Tommy said. “That’s nice of you.” Like he’d just offered to give him a ride home on a rainy day. Like it was a favor he didn’t expect.

This kid was fucked up.

They were silent for a while and then Techno sat up with a sigh. He fished his phone out of the hoodie pocket. “Well, neither of us are sleeping. What types of movies do kids watch these days?”

Tommy blinked at him. “I don’t watch movies.”

“Right.” He fiddled with his phone for a bit and then handed it to Tommy. “I locked you out of everything but Netflix, so don’t even try it,” he said.

Tommy spent about 30 minutes just scrolling through Netflix, reading the titles, before he selected a horror movie seemingly at random.

He proceeded to refuse to back out for the entire 2 hours of the movie’s runtime despite the fact that he was clearly not built for horror movies. Hmm... maybe the R rating *did* mean something; he was only 16 after all. He ended up curling into a ball the best he could with a cow stuffed animal clutched to his chest and jumped at everything that happened on screen. Ah, so that’s what the stuffed animals in Wilbur’s room were about.

Techno tried not to laugh at the jumpy boy. He really did.

“Dickhead,” Tommy spat when the movie ended. “Stop laughing at me.”

“We could have backed out at any time.”

“No! I’m a man! A big man.”

“Sure, Tommy. Next time you’re watching a G rated movie. Animated animals only.”

“I do not like you.”

“Is that why you’re trying to cuddle me for comfort?”

“I am not. Shut up.” He pressed his forehead into Techno’s shoulder. “When is Ghostbur getting back? I like him better.”

“We could wake up Will.”

“No. Ew.”

Techno chuckled and Tommy sat up, still holding the cow stuffed animal.

“Hey, Technoblade,” he said, looking over at Wilbur’s sleeping form in the corner. “Do you have any shaving cream?”

Techno blinked at him. “What? Why?”

Tommy shrugged, his eyes cutting to Techno and then back to Wilbur and then back to Techno.

Oh, Techno thought. “You know what?” I have a better idea.”

“Technoblade, I’m going to be rather cross with you,” Ghostbur warned from the bed. He’d returned while Technoblade was sneaking up to the kitchen. He didn’t know what they’d discussed while he’d been gone, but it was likely about Tommy’s friend.

Despite his words of warning, Ghostbur didn’t move to stop Techno, likely because Tommy was full on giggling over his small bowl of chocolate ice cream topped with strawberries and whipped cream.

Technoblade shrugged. “Meh. Worth it.”

Chapter End Notes

Ghostbur: Ah, but you see Technoblade. He is baby.

Techno: *rolls eyes*

****1 hour later****

Techno: Oh no. He is baby.

(This conversation was illustrated and you can find it [here!](#))

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

If you got a notification for the other story in this series, no you didn't. (I accidentally posted it as chapter 2 of One Step Forward instead of to this one. Shhh.)

Oh! Speaking of! If you click the little series button for Stepping Stones, you'll find a book of one-shots I've started since the last chapter posted detailing a bit about Phil and Techno's backstory! It's sad! :D

More things may be coming to the series Stepping Stones soon. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Phil stumbled into his kitchen slightly before 6am, still feeling a bit groggy. He'd had a restless night despite being exhausted when he'd collapsed into bed the night before. He'd woken up at 5:15 this morning. Laying in bed for over half an hour had not yielded the desired results. So, it was going to have to be coffee today.

Will would probably be needing some too, since he'd stayed up all night and Techno was addicted, so he went ahead and made a whole pot. Techno had gotten him a fancy coffee maker for his birthday two years ago which had a heating element to keep the coffee warm long after it was brewed. (The little bastard. Who was the gift for again?)

He noticed with some confusion an ice cream scoop in the sink while getting water for the coffee. That was odd. Techno had filled the dishwasher right before they'd both gone to bed the night before, so it was strange that something was now dirty. Phil shrugged it off and started the coffee maker.

He walked back to his room to get dressed while waiting for the coffee to brew. Techno's door was open indicating he was awake. It was not unusual for him to be up at this hour as he'd gotten into the habit of getting up ridiculously early when he'd shared a bathroom with Will in a bid to actually get to wash his hair in the morning before school. They'd moved house and neither of them were in school anymore, but old habits die hard. Yet, it was strange that despite the lack of shower sounds there was no Technoblade in the kitchen or living room. He wouldn't have gone off to train or anything before breakfast, so Phil wasn't sure where he could be.

He grabbed himself a mug of coffee when it was finished and texted Techno asking him where he was. Of course, Techno had a habit of forgetting his phone existed, so he was unsurprised when he didn't hear back after a few minutes. (It was one of the reasons they had emergency buttons on their watches. You didn't want a 'Er. Sorry,' text to come through 2 hours after you'd been bleeding out in the streets.) He'd start breakfast soon, and that'd be sure to draw his attention, but for now he decided to go check on Tommy and Wilbur.

He'd honestly been a bit anxious to leave the two of them alone for such a long time. He trusted Wilbur of course, but Tommy had been surprisingly shaky considering his usual personality and Wilbur could be... intense when he wanted to be. There was also no love lost between the two of

them, but Wilbur had sung to him a bit to help him heal, and Phil trusted he'd be gentler considering the kid was already in pain.

His feet had just hit the bottom of the stairs when he heard a familiar shriek slice through the air. Now, maybe most fathers would be worried when their son screamed like that, especially knowing he was locked in a room with a kidnapped enemy, but Phil knew that particular scream. Wilbur's powers layered over the sound, but there was no true defense or attack in it, like a cat smacking at something with retracted claws. The use of his powers did nothing but make the scream louder and shriller than most humans could produce without harming their vocal cords. That was an angered Wilbur but angered in the sort of gentle way only a few select people could evoke.

He had a feeling he knew where Technoblade was this morning.

There were no more screams after the first, so Phil did not bother to quicken his haste through the maze of hallways and locked doors to Tommy's cell.

"-you! I hate you! I hate you!" met Phil's ears as soon as he opened the door. Each declaration was punctuated by Wilbur violently smacking Techno with a pillow. Techno was not doing much to resist the assault. He had one hand up to slightly block the pillow but was mostly too busy laughing that high pitched crackling laugh which only torturing Wilbur had ever managed to elicit.

Most of the pillows which Phil had left in a nice stack the day before were scattered across the floor, indicating they had been used as range weapons at onset. Techno was not wearing his mask despite being in the cell with Tommy and Wilbur's mask was off center and covered in what appeared to be whipped cream; the hand clutching the pillow seemed to be as well. Tommy himself was still on the bed. He seemed to be enjoying the show judging by the gleeful smile on his face. Phil was startled to see *his* face was stained with blue. He was clutching a large stuffed cow Phil did not recognize in one hand and appeared to be holding Techno's glasses in the other.

"What is going on here?" Phil asked.

Wilbur paused his attack to face Phil with a hilariously wounded look in his eyes. "He fed the prisoner ice cream," Wilbur said pointing at Techno, "and then he put whipped cream on my hand while I was sleeping and made me slap myself across my face with it!"

"Well, I wasn't going to let the prisoner put whipped cream on your hand," Techno drawled. "He's injured and would have had to bend down to do that."

Wilbur lashed out, slapping the pillow across his face. Techno just laughed again, and Wilbur turned back to Phil to pout at him like he was going to do something about it.

"Don't look at me like that," Phil said. "You're the one who taught him that. On me."

"First person to fall asleep at the slumber party gets pranked, nerd," Technoblade informed him of his own rules.

Tommy giggled from the bed and Phil had to smother a laugh himself at the enraged look that crossed Wilbur's face. "This is not a slumber party! It's a hostage situation!"

"Is that why you fell asleep?"

"Shut up."

“Just because you fell asleep early doesn’t mean you get to be cranky Will,” Technoblade said. “We watched a horror movie and ate ice cream. That plus the pillow fight definitely qualifies this as a slumber party. Don’t you agree, Tommy?”

“I very much do agree, Mr. Blade,” Tommy agreed seriously. He was clearly delighted that he and Techno were on the same team.

Something about Wilbur’s demeanor changed just a bit. He was still angry, but something else seemed to be charging it suddenly. “You let *him* watch horror?!” he asked, seeming horrified at the thought. Phil was not sure why he was focusing in on that suddenly.

“...People under 17 can watch an R rated movie as long as an adult is with them,” Techno said. “So, it’s fine.”

“You let him watch an *R rated* horror movie?!” Wilbur shrieked, sounding strangely like a suburban mother who just learned you let her precious 6-year-old Keven drink a *gasp* Pepsi at your son’s birthday party. Phil had neglected to mention the slice of chocolate cake that was also consumed.

Techno rolled his eyes. “Calm down Wilbur. You’re being overprotective.”

“Overprotective?” he asked, sounding confused. “What the hell are you talking about? I’m just mad that you let the prisoner watch a movie, because,” and he paused for a moment before seeming to decide on, “that gave him access to the internet.”

Techno tilted his head slightly to the side. “Have you checked out his face this morning?”

Wilbur gave Techno a confused look and then glanced over at Tommy. A blush immediately dusted his cheeks.

“Oi, what’s wrong with me face?” Tommy asked.

Wilbur turned back to Techno. “Oh, god. What did I do?”

“Apparently,” Techno said. “Mr. Casper the Friendly Ghost hasn’t been forthcoming with information lately. Including the fact that you really like Tommy when you’re asleep.”

“No, seriously, what’s wrong with my face?” Tommy asked. He did not seem shocked by the assertion that a version of Wilbur liked him. Of course, that made sense if the ghost had kissed his head and booped his nose as he appeared to have done.

Techno grabbed his phone and opened the camera app, handing it to him.

Tommy looked at himself and tried to rub the blue stain off his nose. He turned to glare at Wilbur when it did not smudge in the slightest. “You stained me?!”

“I-”

“Bitch!”

The shade of blue staining his face was not exactly an unordinary sight. Finding blobs of blue staining his and Techno’s skin and clothing had been a common occurrence before they’d even known the source was there. For years they’d thought it was somehow connected to Techno’s powers as it seemed to happen more frequently, but not exclusively, whenever his powers were used. It had been an accepted part of their lives for more than a decade which they’d at the time just shrugged off. Now,

it was a retroactive comfort to be able to look back into his memories and have proof that his son had been there even while he'd grieved him.

Yet, despite the marks being a familiar sight, Phil was surprised to see them on Tommy, especially in the shape the one on his forehead was. Wilbur in the light of day had again and again expressed his vehement dislike for Tommy. Yet, apparently, his subconscious had a different opinion of the boy. That was... adorable. His son was adorable.

"How long is this shit going to be on my face?!" Tommy asked. Wilbur did not answer, looking for all the world to be in physical pain.

"Usually around a week," Techno supplied.

"A week!" Tommy exclaimed. "Fuck you!"

"Stop throwing a tantrum," Wilbur hissed. "It's not a big deal."

"Easy for someone like you to say," Tommy returned.

"What does that mean?"

"It means you're ugly, so having a bunch of weird blue blemishes on your face would probably be an improvement, and this time I've actually seen your face. So, I really do mean it when I say you're ugly as fuck."

"Fuck you, you little gremlin. I hate you!"

"Yeah, yeah, go back to sleep. You're less stupid when you're unconscious."

Wilbur sputtered indignantly, and as interesting as this interaction was to watch, Phil decided it was about time for him to step in. "I was just about to make breakfast," he interjected. "Any requests, Tommy?" His eyes cut to Techno. "Preferably ones that don't involve sweets for breakfast."

Tommy glanced at him. "Oh," he said. "I'm not actually hungry right now..."

Phil looked him over for a moment. "You feel sick from the ice cream, don't you?"

"Maybe a little," Tommy admitted.

Techno shrugged, unrepentant when Phil shot him a look. "I'll bring you some more soup in a thermos so you can eat it later," he said kindly, before turning to the door. "For now, I think the three of us need to go upstairs for breakfast."

He didn't glance back to see if his suggestion was being obeyed, but he did hear Techno tell Tommy that someone would be back soon, his tone dipping into something oddly soft and reassuring and what the hell was happening? This was Technoblade.

Phil made his way back up to the kitchen, the two younger men only arguing a little bit behind him along the way. They were still a bit wound up but were settling in preparation for the more serious conversation they knew would be happening in a minute.

"So," Phil said once they got to the kitchen. "What on Earth happened in the last 8 hours?"

"Somebody fell asleep on the job last night," Techno said.

Wilbur crashed into his usual seat, tucking one leg under him, and folding his arms: pouting.

“I did figure that much out,” Phil said, a smile pulling at his lips as he patted the top of Will’s head mock consolingly. “So much for not falling asleep in the same room as a captured hero.”

Wilbur grumbled at him. “Well maybe *somebody* shouldn’t have fed the already hyperactive child a million liters of caffeine yesterday, so he couldn’t sleep. I sang for him for almost three hours before apparently putting myself to sleep.”

“L,” Techno commented.

“There’s reverb in the room!”

“So then?” Phil prompted.

“So, then I went and got Techno and I... can’t remember anything more than that.”

“Nothing?” Phil asked, a bit concerned. “From the entire night?”

Will shook his head. “Fell asleep. Talked to Techno. Woke up to whipped cream in my face.” But there was clearly a lot more that had happened considering the stains of blue on Tommy and his sheets and they both knew it.

“Ghostbur has apparently been nuking his own memory so Will doesn’t have access,” Techno supplied an explanation.

“What?” Phil asked. “Why?”

“I’m not 100% sure,” Techno answered, “but we talked, and he clearly knows more about Tommy that we do and has for a while. He’s apparently been following him around at night since the first time we fought him, but he was pretty closed lipped about it. All I really got was that the hero Tommy traded himself for was his roommate and named Tubbo, Ghostbur is very attached, and...” He paused.

“What?” Phil asked.

Techno studied him for a second. “You might want to grab another coffee and sit down,” he said. “I have something to tell you that you are not going to like.”

He sounded very certain about that fact. Considering how well they knew each other, Phil imagined he was not overstating things. Phil followed his instructions, turning to move towards the coffee pot and refilling his own cup before grabbing two more for Wilbur and Techno. Techno took the seat next to Wilbur as Phil did so and Phil passed out the mugs and sat down across from them.

“Okay,” Phil said. “What?”

Techno’s face was fairly neutral when he looked at Phil, but there was tension in the lines around his mouth. He took a sip of the coffee Phil had just handed him before carefully saying, “Tommy’s 16.”

Phil blinked at him uncomprehendingly for a moment. “No, he’s not,” Phil said.

“Ghostbur knows a lot about him,” Techno said, “and he let his age slip while talking to me. It does... match. He looks young.”

“No,” Phil replied, a bit of disbelieving laughter to his voice, “because he works for The Guild. They don’t even let anyone apply until they’re 18, let alone fight.”

“It’s been 12 years since you worked there, Phil. Policies change,” Techno said, “and that’s... apparently not true anymore.”

“But,” Phil said, “they’re superheroes. That’s not... It’s the Superhero Guild. I know we don’t always see eye to eye with them and they’re not exempt from mistakes, but there has to be some level of basic morality at play there.”

Techno and Wilbur shared a glance. “Dad,” Wilbur said. “I think everyone here knows for a fact that not every superhero cares if someone is a kid.”

Phil’s mind immediately went to both times he’d left the Guild: an attempted execution and a kidnapping. But the first had been a horrible miscommunication and the second a group of outliers. It wasn’t supposed to be like that. It wasn’t supposed to be something so systematic and cruel that they let literal children fight their battles.

“But they sent him to fight us,” Phil said.

“Yeah,” confirmed Techno. “They did.”

He gave it a moment to sink in. “Okay,” he said, standing from his chair. “One of you two warm up the soup for him. I need to do something.”

He watched out of the corner of his eye as Techno opened his mouth, but Wilbur reached over and laid a hand on his arm with a headshake.

Phil walked back down the stairs, but he didn’t head to the room that housed Tommy. Instead, he turned to walk in the direction of the underground part of the garage, specifically to one of the outer edge rooms where they’d had Tommy change before being put in the cell.

It took him a couple of minutes to find what he was looking for. The ruined supersuit had been tucked away into the corner of the changing room. No one had bothered to look for it in the activity of the past couple of days. It was hard to spot despite being bright red as it had been hidden as well as it could be, tucked halfway under a small cabinet; apparently Tommy hadn’t wanted them to see it.

It was ripped, Phil noted when he picked it up, likely the source of the makeshift bandage Phil had cut off of him. There were darker red areas on the inside from where his blood had stained it. It was dry by now, but there was a red streak on the floor below where it had been hidden. He felt a shiver go down his spine at the sight. It wasn’t the blood, he knew, that freaked him out. He had seen plenty of that before. It was the fact that it had been so resolutely hidden from him. It was the fact that he hadn’t noticed.

Yet, that was old news. The knife wound had been stitched up and Tommy was resting (even if he had apparently barely slept the night before). What he was here for was not the blood staining the inside of the suit, but something on the outside. There was a little scrap of fabric he had to search for that ended up being on the side of the costume, a bit below the left armpit. He popped it up to view the underside. An insignia was revealed that proclaimed the Red Glider was a level 1 hero, though there was an extra bar there that Phil did not know the meaning of. Add that one more thing to the pile of what Phil didn’t know about how the Guild worked these days. He let the fabric slip out of his hands and flutter to the floor. He’d deal with it later.

Now, he pulled his phone out of his pocket. It took a few rings for it to be answered. "Hello?" Puffy's voice answered.

"Is he underaged?" Phil asked without preamble. There was a long pause on the other end of the line that told him everything he needed to know. "So, what?" he said faux calmly. "Your side is making child soldiers now?"

"It..." she said. Phil waited for her to struggle while finding something to say, something to explain why he has a 16-year-old with a stab wound locked in a prison cell. "It was supposed to be a training program," she said weakly. "It was designed to pick out high school students with potential and pair them with mentors working at the agency. They'd get to learn skills and have a foot in the door for when they got old enough."

"But it's not training, Puffy!" Phil snapped. "Do you know how many times I fought that fucking kid? It's not like he was out for ice cream with his mentor and got caught up in some shit. He was alone. He was sent after us alone. What the fuck were you all thinking?"

"That wasn't supposed to happen," she said. "I don't know... something's changed here."

"Oh, it changed, did it?" Phil asked, teeth bared at nothing. "I wouldn't have guessed." He pinched his brow. "He was injured when we picked him up."

"What?" she asked. "Is he okay?"

"Do you care?"

"Don't," she said warningly.

"Of course, he's okay," Phil said. "We fixed him up as soon as we figured out he was bleeding. He's probably lucky we picked him up so he could get some medical care that wasn't shoddily stitching himself up on a grocery store floor, because he apparently doesn't get health care."

"He's not... technically a full-time employee."

Phil actually laughed. He wasn't sure why, but he did. "Of course," Phil said. "Of course, he's not. It's like an internship, isn't it? It's not like he's doing anything dangerous or important. Does he also bring you all coffee when he's not being sent out to fight supervillains alone?"

There was uncomfortable silence on the other end of the phone. Good.

"What if it wasn't me, Puffy?" Phil asked. "I'll give him credit. He's fast and smart, but we were never trying to slit his fucking throat. Do you know what could have happened to him if he'd fought a real supervillain? He's 16 now. When did he start? At 15? 14? Kids not old enough to drive a motor vehicle are not old enough to decide if their willing to put their lives on the line for your cause."

"You're right," she agreed. "They're not."

"Then what the fuck are you doing?" Phil asked. She didn't have an answer. "Who's his mentor? Who did Phil need to murder?"

"Dream," she answered.

"Great," Phil said bitterly. "Fantastic to know the corruption and moral deficit is all the way up the ranks now." She said nothing and Phil tilted his head. "Leave the Guild, Puffy."

“I...” she hesitated. “You know I can’t, Phil.”

“No,” Phil said. “I don’t know that. If they’re crossing this line, what other lines have they crossed. Do you even know? Did you even notice?”

“I...”

“There’s a place for you here. Join me.”

She paused. “Why do you keep asking?” she asked. “Clearly the fact that I haven’t done anything about it crosses a line for you.”

Phil tilted his head back. “Yes, it does.”

“Then, why?”

“Because,” he said. “People make mistakes, but I know at the end of the day, when the cards are all on the table, you’ll make the right choice. I just hope it’s not too late this time.”

She hesitated. “Every side thinks they’re right, Phil,” she said.

“I am.” He hung up without another word.

Chapter End Notes

Phil: Where's Technoblade?

Wilbur: *Inhuman pterodactyl shriek*

Phil: Found him.

(Sorry, I just think it's so cute that he can identify things like Wilbur's scream and Techno's laugh and pinpoint *exactly* what is going on in his house.)

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Hey, just a warning, cannibalisms is mentioned briefly in dialogue. It's not, like, anywhere near graphic, but I still thought I ought to mention it.

Also, I think it's time to add the Touch-Starved TommyInnit tag to this story after this chapter. Gee kid.

Also! There is now a third story in the series talking about Wilbur's backstory! So... if you're already sad about Ghostbur... wanna be... more sad?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Technoblade ended up being the first one to return to Tommy's room after they all left to get breakfast. It only took about 20 minutes, but it was clear he hadn't used those 20 minutes to eat breakfast because he'd brought a plate of food with him along with the promised thermos full of soup for Tommy. His hair was still down, but now it was damp, and he'd changed, though he still was wearing lounge wear. He set the thermos next to Tommy on the nightstand along with an empty bowl and a spoon.

He took a seat on the bed next to Tommy where he'd been laying most of the night before, his plate full of scrambled eggs and grape jelly covered toast on his lap.

Tommy looked at him expectantly. "What?" he asked.

"If I'm sharing the bed, you're sharing the Netflix."

Technoblade rolled his eyes but held the slice of toast he was in the middle of eating in his mouth while he shifted to pull his phone out of his pocket. He tossed it on Tommy's lap. "No horror movies," he said after swallowing his bite of toast.

"Aw, are you a scaredy cat, Blade?" he taunted even though Tommy had 0 plans to watch another horror movie.

"What can I say?" Technoblade said blankly. "Ghosts bother me."

It took a couple of seconds for Tommy to remember why that was a joke, but when he did, he snorted out a laugh. Then, he thought about it for a couple more seconds and laughed harder.

"Don't rip your stitches," Technoblade cautioned, but his face was so hilariously neutral that Tommy just laughed harder, to the point where his stitches really did start to hurt.

He managed to calm down after a minute or two, though he quickly learned looking at Technoblade's face caused him to giggle a bit more even once he was mostly calmed down. He just... *looked* at Tommy while calmly working his way through one of the pieces of toast and his eggs, and for some reason, Tommy found that hilarious.

“You’re a funny man, Mr. The Blade,” Tommy said, flopping back against the pillows.

Technoblade just hummed, seeming to decide he was less hysterical and thus was willing to interact with him again. “How’s your stomach?”

Tommy made a so-so motion with his hand.

“Bite of toast?” he offered, brandishing an unbitten half piece of toast. Tommy sat up slightly and leaned forward to bite a chunk off. Technoblade watched him with a neutral expression. “I had meant you could tear off a bite, but that’s fine.”

Tommy just shrugged. The jelly was really good when it hit his tongue, sweet, but not as sweet as the ice cream and whipped cream from earlier. Yet, despite the nice flavor of the jam, the moment he sunk his teeth into the bite, his nose screwed up and he opened his mouth to spit it out. “Your toast has hard bits in it,” he notified Technoblade.

Technoblade stared at him for a moment. “It’s whole wheat,” he said.

Tommy frowned at him. “I don’t know what type of bread you think you’ve been eating, but bread’s not supposed to have lumps, buddy.”

“This bread is,” Technoblade said. He reached over to grab one of the paper towels he’d brought for napkins to clean up the blob of half chewed food on the bed between them. He didn’t offer Tommy anymore toast after that, but Tommy didn’t really want to try lumpy bread again even if the lumps were supposed to be there, so he didn’t mind much.

He went back to scrolling through the Netflix options on Technoblade’s phone but was having trouble deciding since his last random pick had ended up being about a guy murdering a bunch of teenagers with an ax. Technoblade seemed to notice his struggle because after finishing off his weird toast, he held out a hand.

“Here,” he said. “Wanna piss off Will?”

And, of course, Tommy nodded eagerly and handed over the phone.

Technoblade typed something into the search bar before handing it back. “Watch that.”

Tommy blinked at it. “Okay,” he agreed, and pressed play. It only took him a few minutes to figure out why Technoblade had suggested this movie and he let out a snort. Who knew the Blade was the funniest human being in existence? Besides Tommy of course who was much cooler and funnier, but he was solidly in second place.

They pretty much just chilled for the next 10 minutes or so, Tommy watching the movie and Technoblade sitting beside him, head tilted to watch the screen, but overall, not seeming terribly interested. Tommy paused the video when he heard the door beep and start to open, looking up as Phil walked in.

He’d brought his stack of books again, and Tommy did his best not to grimace. Hopefully, having Technoblade’s phone to watch movies would explain why Tommy didn’t want to read any of them. Unfortunately... it only had 35% charge at the moment, so he wondered how long that’d last.

“Hey there,” Phil said. He wore a bright smile, but tension pulled at the edges of it. Most people probably wouldn’t have seen it, but Tommy had gotten pretty good at picking up when someone was angry on the inside but pretending to not be on the outside. That was usually a lot more dangerous

than angry on the outside. Tommy's assessment of the man's emotions was only confirmed by the fact that Technoblade eyed him warily for a moment before his expression smoothed out once again.

"Hullo," Technoblade greeted. Other than that brief flash of caution, he seemed mostly unconcerned about the ire bubbling under the surface of Phil's skin, but then again, maybe he didn't have a reason to be nervous. Tommy, on the other hand, was on a very different playing field.

"Where's Whippoorwill?" Phil asked.

"Shower," Technoblade answered. "So, it'll be a few more hours. Also, Ghostbur blabbed all of the names immediately, so don't even bother."

"I see," Phil said. Tommy wondered if that made him angrier or if he didn't care. It wasn't like his own identity was too much of a secret since he just added "za" to his name and didn't wear a mask. He turned to Tommy and Tommy did his best to remain still under his gaze. "And how are you? Feeling any better?"

"I'm alright," he answered, keeping his volume down as low as possible. He must have done something right, because Phil's expression seemed to gentle a bit while looking at him.

"How's your stomach?"

"Mostly better," Tommy replied.

"Good. Maybe give it a bit and then try to eat something. You are still recovering. Good healthy food is important.

Tommy nodded obediently. "Okay."

Phil smiled and he finally gave Tommy a chance to breathe when he turned his attention back on Technoblade. "Want me to do your hair, Tech?" Phil offered.

"Mmm, no," he said.

"No?" Phil asked, seeming surprised.

Technoblade stretched out his legs and flopped back onto the bed, his head hitting the pillow.

Phil gave him a curious look as he let his eyes slip closed. "I... see?"

Technoblade grunted instead of trying to explain away Phil's confusion. Tommy felt like it was probably okay now to turn back to the phone and press play. He still carefully tracked Phil's movements as he crossed the room towards the chair next to Tommy. A hand descended suddenly onto his shoulder. You'd think he'd be at least a little used to that by now considering how touchy he'd been yesterday, but it still made it feel like Tommy's insides had frozen solid for a few moments before they slowly melted into a warm gooey puddle.

"What are you watching?" Phil asked, his thumb rubbing an absentminded circle on Tommy's shoulder blade.

It took Tommy's mind a second to compute the question. He stared down at the video playing blankly. "Uh, *Casper*," he answered. "Technoblade suggested it."

Phil obviously knew what the movie was about the moment Tommy said it's name, but luckily instead of squeezing Tommy's shoulder until it broke, he turned an exasperated look on Technoblade.

"Techno," he scolded.

Technoblade did not flinch at the annoyance in his tone. His lip curled just the slightest amount, but other than that he kept laying there peacefully. He didn't even deign to open his eyes and look at the man reprimanding him.

"I swear," Phil said, "one of these days, you two and your bloody insistence on jokes about death will..." he trailed off.

"Be the death of you?" Technoblade completed.

Phil gave a frustrating sounding sigh, and Tommy went even stiller when he felt the hand on his shoulder constrict, but it didn't go anywhere further than a gentle squeeze, and then Tommy was released. Phil turned to the pile of books he'd brought and grabbed one before sitting down in the chair next to Tommy to read.

Tommy went back to watching the movie about the little not scary ghost boy and tried to ignore how weird this entire situation was. Philza was sat reading a book like he was in his living room, his wings stretched out and relaxed over the edges of the chair, and Blade was lying next to Tommy, still but for his breathing.

"Is he asleep?" Tommy asked Phil after about 30 minutes of this.

"No," Phil answered, his eyes flickering up for a moment before returning to his book.

"He looks asleep," Tommy said. He reached out a hand to poke him in the face, but a hand shot up to wrap around his wrist before he did.

"No," Technoblade said.

Tommy looked at him, startled. "You didn't even open your eyes, man!"

He just hummed and still did not open his eyes, but he did loosen his hold on Tommy's wrist. As soon as he was let go, Tommy continued to reach forward to poke his cheek.

He sighed, Tommy's finger still on his cheek. "Just go back to your movie." He opened one eye to look up at him. "Unless you want me to take my phone back."

"...Fine." Tommy retracted his hand and leaned back again, propping the phone up on his knees, yet he paused the movie only a couple of minutes later when the door beeped, opening once again, as Wilbur returned, a small bag in his hand.

Looking at him, Tommy had to wonder what the hell he'd been doing for the past hour and a half. Technoblade had claimed he'd been in the shower, but how on Earth did it take an hour and a half for him to shower, do his (short) hair, and pull on a sweater?

"Hey," he said, and why the hell did he apparently spend so much time on his stupid hair just to then run his fingers through it like a dick. There was a certain awkwardness to him now, which was fair. Things were a bit weird between them at the moment. It must be super strange to be the biggest proponent of torturing some guy only to find out your ghost or astral projection or whatever had aligned himself with said guy for months.

It was also a little funny to be completely honest.

“The shower didn’t help,” Tommy said.

“Let me guess,” he said with a raised eyebrow. “I still look ugly.”

“Yeah-huh.”

“You’re such an ass,” he said, but surprisingly there was a bit of humor to his tone, not just rage. He walked closer to the bed. “What are you watching?” he asked, nodding at the phone.

In answer, he met Wilbur’s eyes and pressed play. It was clear by the crushing disappointment that fell across his face that he could immediately identify the movie Tommy was watching. It was hilarious in the few seconds it took for it to be consumed by fury. Gee, there must be some joke here Tommy was not aware of because he looked ready to commit homicide. And not even against Tommy!

He rounded on Technoblade, clearly knowing he was the culprit. “What are the long-term consequences of me drowning you in the lake?” he asked.

Technoblade hummed. “*Me* drowning *you* in the lake.”

“It’d be fucking worth it.”

“No drowning each other in the lake,” Phil said, a frown pulling at his face.

“We’ll only half drown each other then,” Wilbur growled.

“*No.*”

Wilbur snatched the phone from Tommy’s hands.

“Hey!”

“You are not allowed to have access to a phone.”

Tommy sputtered. “You were literally fine with it two seconds ago,” he argued. “You’re just being a bitch about the movie choice.”

“I am not,” Wilbur lied.

“Are too!”

“Am not!”

“Are too!”

“Am-”

“Phil, please make them stop,” Technoblade interjected. “I only got 3 hours of sleep last night because of them.”

“How about this,” Phil suggested. “Why don’t I go grab the tv from upstairs? That way, Tommy can watch movies, but he doesn’t have access to a phone.”

Tommy smiled widely because that was not just a win for Tommy, that was a double win. “That sounds like a *fantastic* compromise, Phil.”

Wilbur gnashed his teeth, clearly knowing he’d just gotten owned, but unable to say anything about it unless he wanted to go back on what he’d said earlier. “That would clearly solve every problem that I have with this situation,” he bit out.

Phil obviously was aware of what was happening because he gave Wilbur an amused look. “Alright,” he said, standing up. “I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

“Bring coffee?” Technoblade requested.

Phil shook his head and grabbed Technoblade’s plate from breakfast before leaving the room.

Tommy turned to give Wilbur a smug smile.

“Stop that,” Wilbur said.

“Stop what?”

He puffed out an unhappy breath, but dropped the subject, instead saying. “I should change your bandages while we wait.”

“Fine,” Tommy agreed.

He rounded the bed and set the bag on the nightstand next to Tommy. He glanced at the clearly unused bowl and spoon there. “You should probably try to eat at least a little something if you can, so you can take the antibiotic,” he instructed as he pulled fresh bandages out of the bag. He acted differently when in doctor mode: namely not like a huge jerk. “Lift up your shirt for me.”

Tommy did so, and Wilbur set to work undoing the old bandages, his fingers deft and careful. Tommy let his eyes drift while this happened. Technoblade was still as the dead again, though he probably wasn’t totally asleep based on early. The heavy thermos of soup was on the nightstand within reach and Wilbur’s head was bent over Tommy’s torso, focused on the wound. Phil wasn’t in the room.

...

Technoblade wasn’t quite asleep, but he wasn’t quite awake either. If Tommy reached over quickly and grabbed the thermos, he could slam it into Wilbur’s head before either of them realized what was happening. The problem would be Technoblade who would recover fast. If Tommy had his powers, he could probably evade him for a bit, but it’d get sticky without them. Plus, he was dealing with a still healing wound. Tommy could get a bit of an advantage if he hit Wilbur hard enough, because he could bet Technoblade’s concern for him would take priority especially since he’d assume Tommy had no escape. Yet, that alone wouldn’t give him enough time to wait for Phil to get back and open the door. It’d be a fight and surely a losing one in the close quarters. He glanced around himself for anything else he could use. Maybe there were drugs in the medicine bag. He could grab it and dive under the bed. Maybe Technoblade would be too distracted to notice he’d taken it, and Tommy could surprise him with a needle in the leg. That one might actually work if he were supremely lucky. Of course, he’d still have to actually slip past Phil when he opened the door and then manage to evade them all afterwards, but he was good at getting away when given enough space with or without his powers. He glanced down at the blanket he was under. He could toss that over Technoblade as he smacked Wilbur in the head with the thermos to give himself a few more precious seconds and...

His eyes caught on the cow plushie sat up against his pillow and he hesitated.

The moment of opportunity slipped away as Wilbur straightened after reapplying the bandages.

“Soup?” he asked.

“...Yeah.”

Wilbur went to pour a bit of the soup into the bowl and Tommy watched him. “What?” he asked curiously when he turned around and caught Tommy looking.

Tommy had to search his mind for a question. “Is it weird that you turn into a ghost when you sleep?” he asked.

Wilbur frowned, but it wasn’t necessarily an unhappy frown. It was more contemplative. “Maybe,” he said. He handed the soup over to Tommy. “I don’t know. I’m mostly used to it.”

Tommy nodded and took a bite of his soup. Wilbur took a seat in the chair Phil had been in earlier. “I think,” Tommy said after a moment. “It’d be scary to have a whole other person hiding in your head waiting until you’re asleep to come out.”

“Ghostbur isn’t exactly a whole other person.”

“He acted different,” Tommy said.

He sighed. “Things feel different when I’m asleep,” he said, “and the you situation isn’t exactly typical. I usually remember what happens when I’m asleep. The lines between Ghostbur and I can blur. Sometimes I feel more like Wilbur when I’m asleep. Sometimes I feel more like Ghostbur when I’m awake. Sometimes the scary part is being alive.”

“...Sounds pretty emo, dude.”

Wilbur let out a surprised laugh.

Tommy stared down at the soup. “He promised me I’d be okay,” he said softly. “Would he be able to stop you if you hurt me?”

Tension instantly zinged through the room. “I’m not going to hurt you, Tommy.” Tommy continued to stare at his bowl. “Why would you think...?”

“You threatened to turn me into soup once,” Tommy pointed out bewildered at the man’s clear confusion.

“...I did?” Wilbur asked.

“Yeah.”

“Well, I didn’t actually mean that, obviously.” Tommy stared at him. “I’m not a cannibal, Tommy!”

“How the hell am I supposed to know that?” he asked. “I’ve met, like, 6 cannibals. Or 5? Does it count if they only ate already dead people?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, 6 then.”

“Oh fuck,” Wilbur said. “How many of my threats during fighting did you take literally?”

“All of them?”

“Fuck.”

Tommy’s head cocked to the side. “You didn’t mean them literally?”

“No!” he said. “I thought that was clear. It was banter. Why would you keep antagonizing me if you thought I was being literal?”

Tommy shrugged. “People say I have no self-preservation instincts and you piss me off.”

Technoblade piped up then. “He’s not a sadistic bastard,” he explained. “He’s just a drama kid who forgets not everyone is as numb to death as the two of us.”

“Oh,” Tommy said.

“I really won’t hurt you,” Wilbur said, and then there was a hand on Tommy’s back. “It’s okay,” and Tommy relaxed marginally when Wilbur made that promise to him for the first and second time. He looked concerned and like he really meant it. Tommy couldn’t think of a reason why he’d lie.

He worked on finishing up the bowl of soup Wilbur had poured him after that. Exhaustion had been dancing around him the entire night, but the caffeine buzz had kept him up. Having something warm in his stomach made him feel a bit sleepier, but not quite enough that he thought he’d be able to fall asleep if he tried.

“More?” Wilbur asked when Tommy handed him back the bowl.

Tommy shook his head. “I’m good for now,” he said and accepted the antibiotic that Wilbur had retrieved from his bag.

He’d just swallowed the pill when the door opened once again. Phil was holding a huge television on his shoulder like it was a pillow and had a smaller version of the thermos used for the soup in his other.

He set the thermos down next to Technoblade. “Your coffee is here,” he said before moving to start to set up the television near the wall opposite the bed.

Technoblade suddenly looked more alive than he had in hours, sitting up to grab the thermos and taking a drink. Tommy wondered as he watched him drink it if coffee could be good. The couple of times he’d tasted it, it had been horrible, but he’d also thought he’d hated tea until yesterday and it smelled kind of nice.

“Can I try some?” he asked, curious.

“No,” said Technoblade immediately.

“Absolutely not!” Wilbur said at the same time.

Tommy frowned at them.

“Do you want more of a caffeine buzz?” Wilbur asked. “You couldn’t sleep because of tea. Lord knows what coffee would do to you.”

And well... he had a point. He didn't quite feel as buzzy as he had earlier, but he still couldn't sleep. It was a horrible feeling to be so tired but forced to be awake. Coffee would probably make that worse. Still, he turned and pouted up at the man setting up the tv.

"You better fucking not, Phil," Wilbur warned.

Phil seemed conflicted. "I'll let you try a bit tomorrow morning once you've rested up. How about that?" he offered.

Tommy frowned. "Fine," he said.

"You'll be a nightmare on coffee," Wilbur muttered.

"You're a nightmare all of the time," Tommy shot back with even less hesitation than usual.

"Do you have to be mean all of the time?"

"You literally started it!"

"I literally stated a fact."

"Prick."

"Gremlin."

The remote was tossed onto Technoblade's lap by Phil. "Techno, put something with bright flashy colors on to distract them both, please."

"If you chose *Casper*, Techno, I will scream," Wilbur threatened.

Technoblade did not acknowledge the threat, but he did end up picking something that wasn't *Casper*. After scrolling for a few seconds, he selected a movie about animated fish and set the remote down in favor of drinking more of his coffee. Phil grabbed the book he'd been reading earlier and sat in a chair on Technoblade's side of the bed.

Tommy turned his attention to the movie. After a while Technoblade shifted to flop back onto the bed again, apparently finished with his coffee and ready to sorta nap again. It was a few minutes after that when Tommy happened to turn his head to the side a bit and noticed Wilbur was frowning at him and Technoblade in a weird way.

"Why are you looking at us all weird and shit?" Tommy asked.

Technoblade opened one of his eyes to look at Wilbur. "Idiot," he declared after a moment of studying the man's face. He promptly closed his eye again. Wilbur just frowned harder at him and, even though Technoblade couldn't see it, he still spoke again. "Oh, Othello, just don't smother us with a pillow."

"That analogy has some weird connotations, you know," Wilbur commented.

"Othello?" Tommy asked.

"Shakespearean tragedy," Technoblade answered.

The only thing Tommy knew about Shakespeare was that he'd written books that were old, hard to read, and probably boring.

Wilbur continued to look at them with his weird frowny face for a couple of minutes before he got up and walked to the end of the bed. He poked Technoblade's foot. "Make room, I'm sick of sitting up to watch the movie."

"No," said Technoblade, but Wilbur seemed to just take that as an invitation because he put a knee on the edge of the bed. "Wilbur, I said no, *hey*." Wilbur flopped about $\frac{3}{4}$ on top of Technoblade and $\frac{1}{4}$ on the empty space between him and Tommy. "Phil, your *spawn*."

"He's in one of his moods and tired, Tech. I don't know what you expect me to do about it."

Technoblade growled a sound that if Tommy had... somehow completely lost his mind and had managed to get himself into Wilbur's position, would have had him off the bed and scurrying across the room in a second. He shifted suddenly, turning onto his side roughly and dumping Wilbur into the space between them. Wilbur seemed unsurprised and unperturbed. In fact, this seemed to be exactly what he'd wanted because now he had a spot on the bed and a smug smile on his face as he met eyes with Technoblade.

Tommy kicked him.

Wilbur lost his staring contest with Technoblade to glare at Tommy. "Hey!"

"This is my bed bitch!" He went to kick Wilbur again, but Wilbur just threw his own legs over Tommy's to stop him. "Bitch," Tommy grumbled.

"Sure Tommy," Wilbur said flippantly while settling himself more comfortably on the stolen piece of bed. Tommy needed to come up with some more cutting insults.

Tommy met Technoblade's eyes over Wilbur's stupid chest. "I thought about bonking him over the head with the thermos earlier," he said.

"If anyone gets to cause him nonfatal brain damage, it's me," Technoblade answered.

"Fair enough, I'll hold him down."

The threat didn't land at all. "Go back to sleep, Techno," Wilbur said, turning his attention back to the television. To Tommy's surprise, Technoblade let it go. His face half disappeared behind Wilbur as he laid his head on the pillow and closed his eyes again.

Wilbur's legs were still thrown over Tommy's (which was probably smart because Tommy fully intended to kick him again as soon as he was able) and there was an elbow poking into his ribs a bit. "Your boney elbow is stabbing me," Tommy hissed. Wilbur didn't glance at him, but he did remove his arm from between them and settled it instead on Tommy's pillow above his head.

Tommy grumbled unhappily but resolved himself to having the bastard there. He shifted around to get as comfortable as he could with his legs still pinned and found the only position where it didn't feel like he was going to fall off the bed necessitated that their sides touch a bit. He watched Wilbur's face, but he didn't seem to mind when Tommy settled against him. Well, good. It was his fault anyway for being a bitch.

He turned back to the movie, but quickly found himself not quite paying attention to it. The weight on his legs had started as an annoyance, but it was actually kind of nice after a bit. He'd been that strung out kind of exhausted all morning, but no matter how aggravating the source, the warmth next to him was making him slowly drift towards a place where he thought he could probably actually fall asleep.

He let himself relax, pressing himself a bit closer under the guise of readjusting but froze when a hand touched his back. Wilbur had wrapped his arm around him now instead of letting it lay above his head. He grumbled a bit in protest even as his head tilted to the side to land on his chest. His sweater was soft against Tommy's cheek and his chest was solid and warm. Wilbur did have one advantage over Ghostbur, Tommy'd give him that.

His exhaustion crashed over him as the hand that had been on his back moved to cradle the back of his head. For the second time in a row that day, he did not get to know how the movie ended.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, Wilbur *is* laying in Tommy's spit.

There is fanart for this chapter [here](#).

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“You are so fucking unbearably pleased with yourself, aren’t you?” Phil asked from his chair next to Techno.

“I just wanted free reign over Netflix once Finding Nemo ended,” Wilbur claimed, and indeed, he was already using the arm not pinned under a sleeping 16-year-old toddler to scroll through the to-watch list he’d made on his account.

“Uh huh,” Phil replied, his voice skeptical. Wilbur selected a movie he’d thought looked interesting a couple of days ago. Techno shifted slightly when Wilbur dropped the remote back onto the bed probably fucking sensing the fact that Wilbur was daring to play an indie movie in his presence. He’d just dropped off into a true sleep a couple of minutes before the movie ended, finally relinquishing his hold on the cautious half doze he’d been forcing all morning. Wilbur put his free hand on his shoulder and hummed a few soft notes. It was just a light suggestion, not an order. In fact, anything more powerful was more likely to make him force himself awake. As it was, he acquiesced with a grunt, falling back asleep fully. Wilbur smiled and took the opportunity to pet his hair.

Phil was giving him a look somewhere between exasperated and fond when Wilbur looked up at him. Wilbur just relinquished Techno’s hair and stretched his arm out towards him with an expectant expression. The look teetered a bit closer to fond as Phil took his hand.

Satisfied, Wilbur turned back to the movie. Wilbur’s tendency to be a bit clingy physically and emotionally was not exactly a secret in their house. His family usually indulged him even while Techno was not naturally touchy by any means. They understood. Being unable to interact properly with anyone for over 14 years and suddenly waking up to a father who was wholeheartedly willing to let him cling as tightly as he wished for as long as he wished did that to a person. He’d been alive again longer than he’d been dead at this point, but sometimes the loneliness still struck, settling into his bones with a burning ache.

Yet, though he was used to his family complying with his demands with varying levels of enthusiasm depending on the target and the day, he’d been surprised by how quickly Tommy had acquiesced when the feelings had suddenly decided to fixate on him out of seemingly nowhere (and also on Techno, but that was not unusual. Wilbur was sure he’d be mocked relentlessly for somehow managing to get jealous of both of them about both of them when he was fully awake to process it.). Not to say Tommy didn’t complain, because he did complain and kicked and threatened him with blunt force trauma, but after the cursory resistance, he’d folded easily. All it had really taken was a bit of encouragement from Wilbur and he’d given in quickly with grumbling lips and clinging fingers. Even now after the poor thing finally managed to fall asleep after his night of caffeine, sweets, and scary movies, he still shifted closer every so often. He’d end up fully on top of Wilbur soon enough if Wilbur let him.

He was probably going to let him.

It was on the edge of unsettling, actually, how willingly his body leaned into touch. He gave the sleeping boy a soft squeeze with the arm around him and his fingers clenched almost desperately in Wilbur’s sweater. He reacted like he hadn’t gotten a hug in over a decade, and well, Wilbur could understand that.

After a few more minutes, the boy inched closer again in his sleep, going so far as to try to turn and lay on top of Wilbur. Unfortunately, that involved him flopping onto his stomach, in particular onto the stitched-up wound. He made a pained sound, just about waking up from it, but Wilbur quickly hushed him, using his powers to sooth him. He carefully turned him back onto his back. His eyes flickered and he made a noise.

“Here, here, hush,” Wilbur said, moving to scoot up the bed and sit against the wall behind it. He had to relinquish Phil’s hand to readjust him, so his head fell in Wilbur’s lap. He settled a bit after that, though he still wormed around a bit until he was more on Wilbur’s lap, his feet hanging over the edge of the bed and his hair brushing Techno’s arm. On pure impulse, Wilbur found himself leaning forward to kiss his forehead. “Don’t laugh,” Wilbur hissed immediately upon realizing what he’d done.

“Why would I be laughing?” Phil asked, laughter in his voice.

“I didn’t do that. You saw nothing.”

Phil was studying him with amusement when he looked up. “Wilbur, there is physical proof you already did that earlier,” he pointed out.

“Don’t remind me.” He settled his arm over Tommy’s chest and the next thing he knew it was being cuddled like it was a teddy bear. Dammit that was adorable. This asshole had no right to be that adorable. Wilbur worked his free hand into the boy’s hair with an internal sigh directed at himself.

He heard Phil shifting a bit and looked back up at him. “I called...” He glanced at Tommy’s face. He was clearly in a deep sleep and wouldn’t be listening in, but Phil was still cautious enough to say, “a contact at the Guild” instead of Puffy, “about him.”

“And she confirmed what Techno said?” Wilbur asked.

“Yes,” Phil said, and Will could see the anger in the pop of his jaw and the way his fingers gripped the book on his lap. Wilbur thought he was angry too, but the anger did not feel new. He was unsurprised by the information even though he hadn’t known it before this morning. Or, at least, he couldn’t recall knowing it. “It was apparently introduced as a training program and somewhere along the way became...” became a 16-year-old bleeding all over their holding cell.

Wilbur smoothed down Tommy’s hair idly and the ball of fluff popped right back into place the second his hand moved on. “Something similar happened the first time around,” he said.

Phil straightened, startled by the information. “It did?” he asked.

“Yes,” Wilbur replied.

“I didn’t know that. You never said...”

Wilbur shrugged. “I didn’t think you’d ever need to know. I’d assumed it was more of a war time thing. Desperate times and all that. Almost killing some kid is actually what made Schlatt turn in the end.”

Phil blinked. “That’s why?”

“There’s a dead son on his conscious,” Wilbur said, “and you know what that does to someone.”

“I never knew.”

“Yeah, well he’s not exactly talkative... at least not about that sort of stuff, and Tech did threaten to cut his throat out anytime he got within 30 feet of you. It wasn’t the best environment for bonding over shared trauma.”

Phil was taken aback by this information for a few long moments before seeming to store it away. “It’s not war now, though,” Phil pointed out.

“No,” Wilbur agreed. “It’s not.”

“Then *why*?” he asked. “I can almost see it then, but not *now*.”

“Because they can, Dad.” He bit back the ‘I’m not sure why you’re surprised’ laying heavy on his tongue. It was good that he was still surprised, that one of them at least could be. In many ways Phil was much more innocent than Wilbur. He may have seen war and death before, but not from every angle.

“We were supposed to prevent shit like this.”

“And we did,” Wilbur reminded, “in a lot of ways.”

“I’m not going to let this stand.”

“I figured,” Wilbur snorted. “We’ll add it to the to do list right behind the suppression orb.”

The way Phil’s nose bunched up clearly said that he didn’t like the idea of waiting. He probably wanted to storm the Superhero Guild right now, but he nodded instead. “We should go for the suppression orb tomorrow. I would have suggested today, but no one slept.”

Wilbur nodded and Phil looked away from him.

“What is this movie even about?” he asked. “They’ve just been riding bikes down different streets in every shot I’ve seen.”

“It’s art,” Wilbur said with a yawn.

“Mhmm.”

“You just don’t get it, old man.”

“I hope I never do.”

“How did you even find a documentary about *sand*?” was what informed Wilbur that Techno was finally awake. He’d slept through Wilbur’s entire first choice and had finally woken about 20 minutes into his second.

Wilbur glanced down at the man blearily peering up at him with a grumpy frown. Aw! It was half asleep Technoblade! Truly a rare and awe-inspiring sight. “Oh, good morning, Sleeping Beauty,” Wilbur said. He managed to twist his tone to mocking instead of fond at the last moment, ironically in a bid to piss Techno off less.

“Shut up,” he grunted, already quickly pushing away any lingering sleepiness, though not nearly as quickly as he could do so, “It’s your fault I’m tired.” It was also Wilbur’s fault he felt safe enough to

fall asleep, but Wilbur wasn't going to point that out with an innocent (at least in this particular moment) child in his lap.

"And I believe you already got your revenge for that," Wilbur sniffed.

He smiled a bit at that, the ass, and sat up, cautious not to jostle the rest of the bed and the still sleeping child on it. He yawned. "I need more coffee."

"I'm pretty sure all of the liquid in your body is coffee by this point," Phil joked.

"I wish," Techno said, and then turned to look at him with as close to a pleading expression as Technoblade ever let cross his face. "Phil?"

"No," Phil said even as the edges of his mouth quirked up, "get it yourself."

Techno stared at the wall for a few moments with his contemplating-the-meaning-of-life-and-his-own-existence look on his face. He sighed. "Yeah, alright," he said pushing himself to his feet.

"We should probably also be thinking about lunch," Phil said, glancing at his watch. "Holy shit, it's 3pm. We need food."

"I made breakfast," Wilbur reminded.

"Yes, yes," said Phil. "You've met your one meal quota for the month. Tech, wanna help me whip something up?"

"Well, I want coffee anyway, and it's not like I'm racing back to watch Netflix when Will has the remote," he said, already heading towards the door.

"You're both classless," Wilbur said after him, though he wasn't sure if Techno could still hear him as he was trying to keep his voice down. "It's very informative!"

"Sure, Will," Phil replied. He stood up to follow Techno, his eyes lingering briefly on Tommy before he turned away.

Despite what he'd said about the documentary being good, Wilbur really didn't end up paying it much mind, since before he could get drawn back into it, Tommy began to stir.

He woke slowly, his hands twitching and gripping at Wilbur's trapped arm, and his eyelashes fluttering. He wiggled a bit and made a confused little sound.

"You're fine," Wilbur told him. He stilled at that, hand squeezing the arm as he cracked open his eyes. "Well, hello there," Wilbur said when they landed on him, his tone much softer than he'd meant it to be.

His nose scrunched up and he turned his head. "Ge' 'ff me," he complained into Wilbur's stomach.

"Hmm, yeah, I'll get right on not literally laying on top of you while holding one of your limbs captive," Wilbur snickered. He reached out his free hand to pet his hair again.

Tommy puffed out an annoyed breath, awake enough to realize he was being mocked, but asleep enough to press back into the hand like a cat. He was so adorable; Wilbur expected a fist in his face any moment.

Luckily, it seemed Tommy wasn't waking up that quickly yet. "Wha's going on?" he asked.

"You fell asleep during the movie," Wilbur explained.

"How long?"

"About 4 hours or so."

He hummed. "Where's Tech'blade?" Tommy asked with a frown, and that sent a warm feeling through Wilbur's chest reminiscent of the time he'd finally managed to strong-arm Phil and Techno into hugging for the first time (excluding times when one of them was dying).

"He and Phil went upstairs to cook some food. They'll be back in a bit. They're pretty good cooks if you think you're up to being off your soup diet."

Tommy flashed him a smile. Adorable. "Blade did let me try some toast earlier. I spit it up where you're sitting right now."

Wilbur immediately wrinkled his nose and moved to scoot out of his current location. "Ew!"

Tommy's head flopped onto the bed and he laughed like a cherub straight from hell. He moved to sit up and winced in pain.

"Do you need more pain meds?" Wilbur asked.

Tommy shook his head. "Think it's still a bit early. Blade gave me some right before you came down earlier."

"Well, we're probably getting to the point where you can have some again, but it's probably better to eat first anyway."

He nodded absently, moving a bit slower as he sat up fully and folded his legs underneath him.

"What're they cooking?" Tommy asked.

"Not sure," Wilbur said. "There's a 89% chance of something with potatoes with Techno helping. I can text them and ask."

Tommy shook his head. "Not a bit deal," he said. "As long as it's not Technoblade's weird fucking bread. It had *bits* in it."

Wilbur tilted his head at him. "You don't have a very varied diet, do you?"

Tommy shrugged. "We eat what's on sale."

Wilbur frowned for a moment, but then smiled. "I'm going to introduce you to so many foods." He wondered if he could convince him to eat a plain lemon like those baby videos on YouTube. That'd be hilarious.

Tommy looked at him for a moment, head cocked. "If I knew all you do to prisoners is feed them weird food, I wouldn't have jumped to trade myself so quickly."

Wilbur was confused by that statement. Why would he be more eager to trade himself when he thought they'd be horrible to him?

He stared at his lap, something crossing his face that Wilbur didn't recognize but also somehow *did*. "Tubbo deserves good food," he said softly.

Oh.

He was quiet for a moment, his fingers bunching in the edge of the shirt he was wearing. "Ghostbur said he's okay," he said, definitely more to himself than Wilbur. "So, it's okay."

Wilbur's hand was reaching into his pocket before he even realized he was moving. Tommy blinked at him in surprise when Wilbur's phone landed in his lap.

"What?" he asked.

"Call him," Wilbur said. "Put it on speaker, so I know you're not pulling any shit, but you can call him."

Tommy just stared at him.

"Preferably before the other two get back."

He rushed to pick up the phone then, dialing a number so quickly that Wilbur was surprised he didn't mess it up. He put it on speaker as soon as it started to ring.

"Hello?" a voice said after a few rings. There was hesitance in the tone at the unavailable caller ID that Wilbur's phone would have put out.

"Hey, Tubbo," Tommy said. There was a painful amount of relief in his tone even though Mushroom Boy had not been the one in supposed danger. Wilbur realized belatedly that he now knew Mushroom Boy's real name.

"Tommy?!" the voice all but shouted. "You escaped? Where are you? We'll come get you wherever you are. Are you okay?"

"I... I'm okay, Tubs, but I, uh, didn't exactly escape."

"What do you mean?" Tubbo asked. "How are you calling me?"

"One of them let me use his phone."

Something funny entered Tubbo's tone at that. It made discomfort squirm in Wilbur's chest. "Why would he do that?" he demanded.

"I," Tommy hesitated, eyes flashing to Wilbur. "I think he's just being nice."

"Nice?" Tubbo asked.

"They haven't been... it hasn't been bad."

There was a pause. "It hasn't been bad?" he echoed. Then contemplatively. "Are you on speaker right now?"

"... Yeah," Tommy answered, "but's it's not like that. I'm really okay."

"Really?"

“Sure, as bees make honey,” Tommy said. Wilbur narrowed his eyes at the phrase and at the expression that flickered over his face as he said it. It was not a very Tommy phrase. A code, perhaps?

The theory was all but confirmed by the way something in Tubbo’s tone calmed, not completely, but just a bit when he spoke again. “You bled all over my hoodie.”

Tommy winced. “Oh, yeah, I got stabbed.”

“I gathered that much from the knife hole.”

“It’s fine. I sewed myself up... and then I ripped my stitched and Wi-Whippoorwill sewed me back up. He’s a fucking bastard, but he’s good with a needle, I’ll give him that. So, everything’s okay.”

Tubbo sighed, seeming to have a sixth sense for his friend’s bullshit. “Tommy, please tell me Whippoorwill is not the one who’s listening to this.”

“He is,” Tommy said. “Why?”

“You can’t... don’t antagonize the supervillain you’re in the custody of!”

“But he’s a weirdo Tubbo,” Tommy whined.

“*Tommy*,” Tubbo scolded.

“It’s fine,” Tommy said. “We already had the torture discussion, and surprisingly he says he does not think it is PogChamp.” He looked up at Wilbur and held the phone out towards him. “Tell him that you don’t think torture is PogChamp.”

Did... did he have to? Wilbur looked at Tommy’s face for a few moments and sighed in defeat. “Torture is not... PogChamp,” Wilbur said with an eyeroll.

“See?!”

There was silence on the other end of the line. “So, they’re being nice,” Tubbo said. There was clear distrust in his tone, but he was trying his best to hide it. “And they let you call me.”

“Yes, well, I knew you’d worry and be all dramatic because you’re a clingy bitch. I told them, ya know. I told them you were a clingy bitch, and so they decided it was okay to call you for your mental health and shit.”

“Ah, yes,” Tubbo said in an icy tone. “*My* dramatic streak. You know, I was thinking of bleeding all over the apartment and then running off to hand myself over to my three biggest enemies, but then you called, so everything’s better.” Oh, Mushroom Boy was pissed.

Tommy hesitated, clearly trying to think of a way to defuse the situation. “Sounds like a pog plan, Big Man.” Or not.

Silence. “Hey, Whippoorwill,” Tubbo addressed him suddenly, his tone dark. “Just a warning. I’m the only one allowed to kill him.”

“...Noted,” said Wilbur.

“Also, he lies about taking medication. He takes antibiotics willingly after he almost died once from an infection, but any other pill has to be shoved down his throat like a cat.”

Tommy's eyes widened. "That's not true!"

"You're right. Sometimes hiding it in peanut butter works," Tubbo snarked.

Wilbur crossed his arms. "I'll make sure he takes the pain meds after he eats."

The way Tommy's lips twisted downwards told Wilbur everything he needed to know about which child to believe.

"Are they going to let you go soon?" Tubbo asked, apparently done talking to Wilbur.

"I don't know," Tommy answered. "Anyway, have I mentioned Whippoorwill has an ugly face? I'm looking right at it and it's very ugly."

Wilbur winced and not because of the insult. That had not been a subject change. That had been an answer. He should have probably spoken up and given them a rough timeline for when they'd hand him back, but Wilbur's mouth stayed sealed shut.

"Stop calling people ugly to their faces, Tommy," Tubbo said, voice tight. "Especially supervillains."

"Why?" Tommy asked. "It's true."

"Please," Tubbo pleaded, voice quieter, "please, just be safe for me."

"... Yeah," Tommy said. "Yeah, I'll do my best Big T. Anyway, this is actually only a 1/3 SBI approved phone call, so we better wrap it up."

"...Bye," Tubbo whispered.

"Bye," Tommy said, hanging up. He shoved the phone back at Wilbur and looked away. "Thanks," he mumbled.

"It... you're welcome," Wilbur said. He became aware suddenly that the sand documentary was still playing in the background. It had been during the entire phone call apparently. He reached over and grabbed the remote to pause it and then placed it on Tommy's knee. "Here, pick something to watch. Anything."

Tommy looked at him, and Wilbur immediately regretted all of his life choices. "Anything?" he asked, eyes sparkling.

Wilbur sighed. "If you must."

"Oh," Tommy said, already moving to type in 'C' to the search bar. "I must."

Chapter End Notes

Wilbur: Don't fall asleep around the prisoner.

Wilbur: He just wants the thermos as a weapon for when we're distracted.

Wilbur: We can't let the prisoner have access to a phone.

Also Wilbur: *The last 5 chapters*

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

There was a reason Tommy did not trust medication. Whatever stupid pills Wilbur had tried to make and Technoblade had made Tommy take after the late lunch/early supper had done nothing but make his head all fuzzy. It was evil, horrible torture. They made him sleepy! He'd already slept enough for the day, thank you very much, but he ended up dozing for the rest of the evening. And for what? They didn't do anything at all!

Okay, maybe his wound didn't hurt as much, but what did that matter if he was 60-100% asleep the whole time he wasn't hurting? It was truly terrible and lame, and how dare they?

From what he could remember through his grogginess, he had expressed his discontent repeatedly with very compelling arguments, but none of them had appreciated his reasoning, and he'd mostly been shoved back into bed and told to watch the movie or go to sleep.

Eventually, they'd decided it was bedtime even though Tommy argued he was a big man who did not have a bedtime and stop patronizing him, Wilbur. He'd cleaned up and changed into yet another white shirt and grey pants before crashing back into bed and falling asleep almost instantly because of the stupid pills.

He woke some hours later with the lights dimmed and the tv shut off. He instinctually jumped at the honestly creepy as all fuck person sitting on the edge of his bed but calmed when he remembered what he was. Apparently, they'd decided that since he already knew about Ghostbur, they may as well all get a full night's sleep, because the ghost was the only one here.

"Hi, Tommy," he said when he noticed he was awake.

"Hi," Tommy said, grumpily. He was still groggy, and the soft bed and low lights didn't help. "Wilbur drugged me," he pouted.

"I know," he replied, sounding more amused than sympathetic.

"He's a bitch," Tommy declared. The cow plushie had been settled next to him at some point and he curled his body around it now.

"Do you feel any better?"

"Yes," he grumbled, "but now I'm tired."

"Well, why don't you go back to sleep?" he suggested.

"Don't wanna."

"Ah," he said with a head tilt. "What do you want to do then?"

"I want to do crime," Tommy answered, "and text women."

"Aren't you supposed to be a superhero?" His smile made his forehead all wrinkly, and Tommy wondered how that worked since he wasn't really in a body right now.

“I want to do crime against supervillains, so it’s okay.”

Ghostbur grinned. “And what crimes would you be committing?”

“Stealing mostly. I’ve always been good at stealing, but I had to stop when I got hired by the Superhero Guild. I’m going to break into your kitchen and take a bite out of every type of food you have except for the weird bread, and then I want the sweater Wilbur was wearing today, because it was very soft.”

“Aw! You liked my sweater,” he cooed.

“Soft,” Tommy mumbled as an answer. He laid his head down with a yawn. “And you’re never getting it back.”

He floated forward a bit and cold non-pressure descended on Tommy’s nose. Tommy wrinkled it. “You can have whatever you like,” Ghostbur promised, “in the morning.”

“You’ll be gone in the morning,” Tommy pointed out.

“Not really,” Ghostbur replied. Tommy didn’t have the energy to argue the point. He blinked once and suddenly Phil was there, him and Ghostbur talking in hushed tones.

Tommy listened to them talking idly without tracking a lot of it. Something cold brushed his forehead and he peaked open his eyes to see Ghostbur hovering over him with a smile.

“Will *no*,” Phil said, his voice a bit louder than it had been before. “You have to let those fade at some point.”

“Never,” was the response.

Tommy gave a confused hum, peering up at him.

“It’s nothing,” Ghostbur promised. He reached out and the cool non-pressure stroked across his brow.

“*Will*,” Phil said, exasperated.

Ghostbur quirked a smile. “See you later, Tommy!”

Tommy looked over at Phil once Ghostbur blinked out of existence. “Wha?” he asked.

“You may have a bit more blue on your face this morning, Mate,” Phil explained.

Tommy’s hand immediately touched his own eyebrow where Ghostbur had touched him a moment before. His mind caught up with what must have happened. “That bastard!”

Phil did not seem insulted on his child’s behalf. Instead, he just chuckled. “He can be that sometimes, yeah.” He sat down on the edge of the bed. “How’d you sleep?”

Tommy crossed his arms. “Well, you all drugged me, so I slept really ‘well.’”

“It was Tylenol PM, Mate.”

“You’re all wrongins.”

Phil patted him on the knee. “You needed sleep to recover anyway.”

“Wrongins,” Tommy hissed out. The hand on his knee squeezed lightly and Tommy was unsure if it was a warning or just a thing Phil does. He decided to back off the complaining just to be safe. “So, what’re the plans for today, Big Man.”

“You’ll be spending most of the morning with me,” he said. “Techno’s cooking breakfast already and Wilbur’s waking up now, obviously. I can bring you down some books or you can watch more movies if you’d like.”

“Movies would be cool,” Tommy said. “Might be too tired to read.” He winced when he realized his excuse ended up being him complaining again, but Phil didn’t react, and Tommy relaxed again after a moment.

“Fair enough,” Phil answered simply. “Now or do you want to sleep more?”

Tommy thought about it for a moment. “Now?”

Phil nodded, and removed his hand to turn on the television and fetch the remote. Tommy spent a bit of time today actually exploring how Netflix worked, since he’d never gotten a chance to use the app before his kidnapping. He quickly figured out that each member of the household had their own subaccounts, that Tommy could easily get into any of their accounts by simply selecting the one he wanted with the remote, and that he could add movies and television shows to their watch lists with the click of a button. He was going to use these facts for evil. In fact, he did not start any movie or television show at all. Instead, he just added selections such as Veggietales, Boss Baby, and every movie that came up when he searched ‘ghost’ to Wilbur’s watch list. He eventually figured out how to reorder said watch list and gleefully intermixed his additions into the ones that had already been on the list. He was pretty sure Phil knew what he was doing, but he hadn’t said to stop.

He’d just added a fifth Scooby Doo movie when the door beeped. Tommy quickly pressed the back button as Wilbur entered the room.

“That was fast,” Phil commented with a raised eyebrow.

“I can get ready fast,” Wilbur replied. He sounded a bit testy.

“You really can’t, Will.”

Wilbur pursed his lips. “Techno finished your breakfast. I’m here to check the child’s stitches.”

“I’m not a child!” Tommy gasped in offence.

Wilbur and Phil both ignored him, Phil rising from his chair. “I’ll be back in a bit,” he said. He’d patted Tommy’s shoulder and moved on to give Wilbur the same treatment as he wandered off towards the door before Tommy even had a chance to tense up.

Wilbur turned to face Tommy once he was gone. “Good morning, child.”

“Shut up!” Tommy hissed with a scowl. “You stained me again, you bastard.” He pointed to his face. Wilbur studied the newest blue mark above Tommy’s eye for a moment. His hand reached forward, and he brushed his fingers across it, the touch an echo of the one that had created the mark but contrastingly warm and solid. Annoyingly, he did not seem embarrassed about it as he’d been the day before nor did he seem at all repentant. Tommy frowned at him and slapped the hand away.

Wilbur just smiled like an asshole and reached to shove at both of his shoulders saying, “Morning check-up time.”

Tommy grumbled but consented to it despite the fact that Wilbur's insistence on checking the stitches and rebandaging the incision was starting to feel more like fussing than necessary medical care. Though, to be fair, the wound was taking a frustrating amount of time to heal. Usually, he'd be peeling off the bandages and literally hopping back into normal activities against doctor (and Tubbo) advisement by now, but he was still rather achy again now that the drugs were wearing off.

"You probably could do without the dressings at this point, but we'll leave it for now," Wilbur told him once he was finished with his fretting. "Also..." he trailed off, reaching back into the bag he'd brought the bandages in. "I was physically unable to not bring this to you." He plopped a piece of folded fabric down in his lap and Tommy did his best not to gasp in excitement when he realized what it was. Ghostbur was the best person ever even if he did mark up Tommy's face before leaving.

He pulled the sweater Wilbur had worn the day before over his head with no hesitation. It was already oversized on Wilbur who was taller than him by a few inches, so he ended up basically drowning in it, but that just made it better.

"Mine forever now, Bitch!" he exclaimed, hugging himself. It was so *soft*.

Wilbur gave him one of his funny looks and then arms were wrapping around Tommy and the sweater. Tommy was distracted enough by his glee at having acquired a sweater that he just hummed, content for about three seconds.

Then he realized what was happening. "Wait! No!" he said, starting to struggle. "Get off! You're clingier than Tubbo!"

Wilbur did not relent, hugging him closer and pressing his face into Tommy's hair. "No, I need a moment."

"Why?" Tommy whined.

"Ghostbur has given me a migraine this morning," Wilbur said as though that explained his behavior.

"So, you've decided to make that my problem?" Tommy grouched. He was like a fucking boa constrictor.

"Yes," he said, "because it's all your fault."

"How's it my fault?" Tommy asked.

"It's about you."

"What?" Tommy asked. "Did Ghostbur decide to mentally punch your nose in because you're a prick?"

Wilbur paused. "Something like that."

"Well, good. You deserve the migraine," Tommy grumbled.

"Okay," Wilbur hummed. He still did not let go. Tommy realized he'd forgotten to keep struggling a while ago, but instead of starting back up again, he just let his head come down to rest on his stupid shoulder.

His hair was slightly damp where it brushed against Tommy's forehead and he smelled like toothpaste. He wasn't wearing a sweater today, but a long-sleeved thin shirt that Tommy could see

him wearing as part of his supervillain costume. Maybe he even had. The prick was probably the only hero or villain ever who didn't just wear the same outfit every time but would instead switch it up with different colored shirts and pants. He even had a couple of different pairs of shoes. The only constant was his mask and the coat he threw over his getup.

"How long am I to be your prisoner?" Tommy asked, and then paused. "Well, more of a prisoner than I already am."

"Hush," Wilbur said. A hand weaved its way into Tommy's hair.

"Don't tell me to 'hush,'" Tommy grumbled even as the way his fingernails scratched gently at his skull was really nice.

"Or what?" Wilbur asked, sounding amused.

"I'll start stabbing shit," Tommy claimed.

"Oh, yes," he said mock seriously, "of course."

"Don't mock me."

"Don't mock me." Wilbur returned, and to Tommy's surprise it came out in Tommy's voice.

"I didn't know your powers included mocking abilities!" Tommy said with a gasp. "That's so cool... I mean... lame. You're lame. Your power is slightly less lame than you are overall, but still very lame."

Wilbur squeezed him softly with the arm not in his hair. "Fuck off."

"I'd like to do nothing more, asshole," Tommy grumbled into his shoulder.

The door beeped then, and Tommy immediately tried to jerk away, but once again managed to get nowhere. "Save me, Blade," he whined when he saw who had arrived. "He's being a clinging dick."

Technoblade looked over them with uncaring eyes. "You put on one of his sweaters?" he asked. "There is no helping you."

"It's my sweater now!" Tommy insisted. "I'm never giving it back."

He hummed, not in the least bit sympathetic to Tommy's current plight. "I brought you breakfast," he informed him. "I didn't know what you liked in omelets, so I just did a cheese mixture. There's also hash browns."

Tommy looked him over and noticed that *he* was definitely in his supervillain costume sans the mask and cape, and his hair was no longer down and poofy, but braided neatly. Tommy was reminded abruptly why he was so fucking intimidating, plate full of breakfast in his hands or no.

Still, Tommy pushed past any leeriness evoked by him wearing $\frac{3}{4}$ of his villain getup. "Please, Techno," he begged, shoving at Wilbur's cheek. "I thought you were against torture."

"I'm not getting anywhere near him when he's like that," Technoblade said. He set Tommy's plate on the nightstand, not that Tommy could reach it right now. "Better you than me."

"Betrayal!"

Technoblade just shrugged and took a seat a good distance away from the bed (the coward). Tommy scowled at him, but he ignored that in favor of scrolling through something on his phone. Tommy sighed and put his head back down on Wilbur's shoulder again. This was not fair. He wanted his omelet.

Thankfully, his salvation came in the form of the door beeping once again.

"Phil, help me, please," Tommy said. "He won't release me to eat breakfast."

"Let him eat, Will," Phil said firmly. Wilbur leaned back to pout at him, and Phil raised an eyebrow. "Don't you and Techno have something you should be doing today anyway?"

He sighed. "Yeah," he relented, finally freeing Tommy from his evil clutches and scooting off the bed. He reached back and ruffled Tommy's hair. "We'll be back later, Gremlin. Got some errands."

"Please, take your time," Tommy said sweetly.

Wilbur rolled his eyes as Technoblade got to his feet. "Any driving conditions I need to know about before we leave?" Wilbur asked as he and Techno left.

"Just a few trees down near the city," Techno answered a moment before the door closed behind them.

Phil was already handing over his breakfast by the time Tommy turned his attention back to him. "You are the only valid man ever," Tommy told him as he took the plate. He took a bite of the omelet. ...Okay, so Technoblade had his uses too, he decided as he chewed. Wilbur could perish.

He ate about half of the omelet and most of the hash browns before he slowed. He glanced up at Phil as he set the plate aside. "So," he said. "Where'd they go?"

"Errands," Phil echoed Wilbur's statement with a serene smile.

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him. "They're doing crime, aren't they?"

The corners of his mouth twitched. "Maybe just a bit," he replied.

Tommy frowned. He wasn't sure how he felt about that. It was one thing to sit around watching movies with them all. It was another thing to know they were out being supervillains while he was locked in their lair. Would someone else be sent to stop them? Would people get hurt? Would it be Tommy's fault for trading himself for Tubbo? Especially if they weren't going to hurt Tubbo in the first place? He shook off the potential guilt for now. "Rude of you guys to make evil villain plots while I'm your prisoner. Aren't you supposed to be focusing all of your attention on me?"

"Well," he said, a sort of soft amusement on his face for some reason. "We had to take advantage of our nemesis being unable to interfere with our 'plots.' You've proven yourself to be quite the obstacle." He did not seem angry. He actually said 'nemesis' almost like someone might say a term of endearment, but this was still dangerous territory.

Tommy decided to proceed with a reckless lack of caution anyway. "That sounds like me," he said cheekily. "The obstacle."

Phil smiled softly. "You're quite good," he said. It was weird, because this was an enemy who was complementing him, but it still made something bubble happily in his chest.

"I..." he said looking down at his lap. He cleared his throat. "Course I am. I'm a big man hero."

Phil gave him a look that seemed to see way more than Tommy wanted him to. “Of course,” he said quietly. “I’ve been very impressed by you.”

“I mean,” Tommy said. “I never exactly won. I just didn’t lose.”

“It was three against one and we’re not exactly low-level villains. I was a level 9 hero at one point and that’s just me. Stopping us from getting everything we wanted and managing to get away every time is incredibly impressive.”

Tommy... didn’t know what to say to that. He’d mostly been told the opposite every time he’d returned from fighting them. It was... nice. Phil seemed to notice his inability to speak, and his hand came out to touch his shoulder with a smile. Tommy couldn’t figure out why Phil touching him like that still made him freeze when Wilbur had tried to smother him earlier and he’d been nothing but annoyed.

“So...” Tommy said, trying to ignore the touch. “What exactly are they up to?”

Phil gave him a skeptical look.

“What? It’s not like I can do anything about it. I’m just curious.”

Phil seemed to mull it over. “They’re just going to go after another suppression orb,” he admitted.

Tommy cocked his head at him. “A suppression orb? Is that the thing I snatched out from under you the other day?” Tommy asked.

“They didn’t tell you what it was?” Phil asked. “I’d think they’d want to tell you what you’ve been defending.” Yet, before Tommy could respond, he continued, his tone strangely darker suddenly. “Or maybe not.”

Tommy shook his head. “No, they didn’t tell me.” He bit his lip. Now this might be pushing it... “What do you guys want it for?”

It took Phil a moment to answer, and Tommy started to get a little nervous, but he didn’t get mad and the hand touching Tommy was still gentle. “It’s part of an enchantment we’re working on making,” he said. “It has some other ingredients necessary to make it work, but the suppression orb’s the rarest one.”

“An enchantment?”

Phil hummed. “You know how power neutralizing cuffs work?” Phil asked.

Tommy glanced at the one on his wrist. “Uh... not really?”

“Well, they’re enchanted,” Phil said. “The dust from a suppression orb is one of the main ingredients, actually.”

“Suppression orbs take away powers, then?”

“Not in their raw form, no. They only weaken powers slightly when activated, but they have a much larger range than things like power neutralizers. The Guild probably thinks we’re trying to set up an anti-power weapon or something.”

Tommy tilted his head at the phrasing. “But you’re not?” he asked.

“No,” Phil replied. He studied Tommy intently for a few tense moments. Tommy found himself holding his breath even though he had no idea what Phil was looking for. “We’re actually using it to get around the Netherrealm barrier.”

Tommy’s brain misfired at that. That was not at all even close to what he’d expected Phil to say. “You... I... The hell you’d want to go down there for?”

“Well,” Phil said. “It’s less about us wanting to get in and more about wanting to get people out.”

“You want to get people out?” Tommy asked, honestly dumbfounded.

“Well. One person for now. That’s as much as we could figure out how to do with one suppression orb, and they’re not exactly easy to come by, but eventually the goal would be to get everyone out if not take down the barrier entirely.”

“You... but *why*?”

“Why?” Phil mused. “I guess because we think it’s wrong. It shouldn’t have existed in the first place, let alone still exist today, but no one is going to do anything about it. No one ever even wants to talk about it.”

Oh, Tommy *knew*. He knew that. No one on the surface cared and if it got brought up, most people just kind of awkwardly changed the subject. No one ever wanted to talk about it, but now Phil was. Tommy wanted to say something too, but he couldn’t get any words to dislodge from his throat. He didn’t know what he would have said anyway.

“It’s been over a century since the barrier was made, and it was a horrible prison idea to begin with,” Phil continued. “They just left everyone there and forgot about them. Don’t get me wrong, the people put there had done bad things, but none of them are even alive at this point. The original supervillains are all dead. It’s just their children or more likely their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The people down there don’t deserve to be down there. Or maybe some of them do, but who knows if they would have if they hadn’t been down there in the first place. Obviously, I haven’t been there myself, but from what I’ve heard it’s all just a circle of violence that can never peter out because it’s all trapped in together. It needs to end. Even if most of them end up being monsters, they can’t stay down there. Even if most of them end up being monsters, I know there has to be at least one person who doesn’t deserve it. We, the three of us, have decided that we can’t stand by anymore. We can’t just leave everyone down there. So, that’s what the suppression orb is for.”

And that... that was a lot. That was way, way too much actually. It felt like someone had shoved a fire resistance potion down his throat and then forced him to drink lava.

Phil blinked at him in surprise after a few moments, his expression flickering between confused and concerned. His hand moved to touch Tommy’s cheek. “You’re crying,” he said, carefully wiping a bit of wetness away.

“M’not,” Tommy said. “I don’t cry.”

Phil’s nose wrinkled up a bit probably because... yeah... yeah... *fuck*.

Tommy wasn’t even sure why to be honest because... because logically he knew Phil’s motivations probably went beyond the purely altruistic reasoning he’d just given. The Pit was full of untapped powers and people who would be unwaveringly loyal to someone who freed them from that hell, so it could easily be part of some bigger plot and yet...

And yet, all his brain could pull up was ‘Me. He would have helped me.’ Phil didn’t even know. He’d clearly been trying to convince Tommy that it was the right thing to free them as though he’d disagree, because a lot of people would disagree. So many people would. Yet, without knowing, Phil had just said that at the most basic level possible he cared about the pain and fear not just of the people currently in the Pit now, but also of Tommy’s childhood. Phil was saying it was wrong. He thought Tommy didn’t deserve it. He didn’t deserve to pay for the crimes of some parents he didn’t even know. And they were not even their crimes, but the crimes of someone 3, maybe even 4 generations removed from him. No one had ever said anything like that before to Tommy.

Phil had just said he wanted to save the group of roaming teenagers who took it upon themselves to make a make-shift nomadic orphanage despite not knowing what the fuck they were doing with babies but saying even if they killed them through negligence or stupidity, it was better than not trying at all. And they had been stupid and negligent, but Tommy was fucking alive to tell the tale.

He wanted to save people like the man who’d taken it upon himself to dress up like the superheroes of old and fight against the relentless tides of evil that walked through the streets. Tommy’d watched him get gutted on the street for the effort, but he’d still made the effort.

He wanted to save the blind old grocery store owner that despite all of the horrible fighting and violence no one ever touched because at some point he’d fed every person in The Pit when they needed it the most and some of them had grown up cruel and deranged, but they never forgot.

He wanted to save the magic seller that had given two 10-year-olds red stone tattoos so they could always know if the other was hurt even though they didn’t have nearly enough to give her for it.

And he wanted to save the murderers and the sadists and the people that bet on how fast a child would die in a ring for fun.

He would have wanted to save Tommy and Tubbo if they hadn’t already saved themselves.

How the fuck was Tommy supposed to deal with that?

The answer was apparently that he fucking couldn’t.

He distantly felt himself being shifted around by arms that had at some point gotten under him. “Here, hush,” Phil’s voice said as he was settled into a lap. Something wrapped around him until his was cocooned between it and Phil’s chest. Feathers. Right: his wings. A soft cloth: a handkerchief or maybe just Phil’s shirt sleeve rubbed carefully across Tommy’s cheeks to clean up the mess there. “It’s okay,” Phil said, and now that Tommy was calming down, he could hear a hint of confusion in his voice still. How the hell was he going to explain *this* reaction? He almost laughed but was pretty sure Phil would think he was legit insane if he did so at this point, so he settled for shoving the thought away for future Tommy to deal with. He turned his face into Phil’s chest to hide from the inquisitive glint in his eyes and Phil let him for now.

Phil squeezed him a bit tighter against his chest, but it couldn’t possibly be a warning or a threat with the way his wings wrapped protectively over him, and his chin settled on top of his head. Tommy felt himself relaxing into the careful hold despite the way his chest still seized with sobs.

“You’ll be okay,” Phil promised, and it felt like it was maybe not a lie.

Phil: I care about human beings at a fundamental level. This includes human beings like you.

Tommy: Poggers. *has a mental breakdown*

There is fanart for this chapter [here!](#)

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Don't forget to check out the prequel one-shot series if you haven't already! I've posted one new chapter to each prequel since the last chapter I posted here. :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

26.

...

27.

“Okay, what’s wrong?” Technoblade finally asked.

Wilbur’s eyes flickered to him and then back to the road. “What do you mean?” he asked.

“You’ve done your hair ruffle thing 27 times since we got in the car, and we basically just left the garage.”

“We’ve been driving for 20 minutes, Technoblade.”

“Yeah, and that’s an average of over one a minute. What?”

Wilbur puffed out a breath. “I’m sorting it.”

That did not answer Techno’s question. Techno turned to scrutinize him intently. “Is your hair damp?” he asked after a few moments of study.

And 28 hair ruffles. “Just drop it. For now.”

Technoblade hadn’t seen him with damp hair (from the shower at least) since the day after Wilbur had woken up from a coma. Wilbur had literally made them an hour late to school once because the hairdryer was broken, and he made Phil go fly and get him a new one. Wilbur probably wouldn’t leave the bathroom with wet hair if the house were on fire.

Techno had noticed him acting a bit on edge when he’d grabbed breakfast, but Morning Wilbur was always a bit weird. Ghostbur and Wilbur often mixed oddly for about the first hour or so that he was awake, and it ranged from acting like an annoying brat to being an intolerable prick. So, Techno hadn’t paid it much mind, but now he’d been up for more than an hour and had damp hair. This was not Morning Wilbur. It was something else.

Techno opened his mouth, but Wilbur cut him off. “Seriously, Tech,” he said. “I’m trying to talk myself out of leveling a couple of city blocks and committing a premediated homicide right now.”

Techno tilted his head. “Who’s dying?” he asked.

He didn't look like he was going to answer, so Technoblade just stared at him in silence in the 'disconcerting' way he sometimes did. He broke after almost 3 minutes. "Dream," he finally bit out.

"The head of the Superhero Guild?" Techno asked. Though, really, what other Dream would he be talking about. The sudden intent to murder declaration was a surprise. They'd been fairly neutral on Dream in the past, though it was true that they didn't know much about him. He was a mostly new addition in this timeline. He'd been around the last time, but Techno hadn't seen much of him, and he'd been at worst neutral in the war. Which, considering Puffy had been the same until the last few months and Schlatt had been worse for a majority of the time, did not predispose Technoblade to hating him now. He'd been just a midrange hero with no positions of power. Bad had been dragged out of retirement when the head of the Guild had been slaughtered near the beginning of the war last time. Which had ended up a bad thing for Bad and for the war efforts in the end. In this timeline, Bad was off somewhere unknown and Dream had taken over when the previous head decided to retire peacefully a couple of years ago. Techno and he had even had a relatively friendly duel once over a dispute with the Guild. He hadn't seemed particularly bad. "Why?" Techno asked.

"Tommy," was Wilbur's answer.

"What about Tommy?" Techno asked confused.

"He's Tommy's mentor. Among many other things, he was the one to send him after us."

"Oh," Techno said, and he immediately felt his neutral perception of the man dip negative. He could guess at what 'things' could be considering Tommy's behavior and his own experiences. Then, Techno realized something else. "You remember something?" he asked.

Wilbur didn't say anything.

"Everything?" Techno tried again.

"Everything," he confirmed.

"And?"

"Ghostbur is a passive idiot, and I'm going to enjoy watching Dream bleed out at my feet." Now, Wilbur had a tendency to sling death threats around a bit haphazardly, but Techno had no doubts that he was absolutely serious in this case. It was clear in the glint in his eyes and in the placement of his grip on the steering wheel that this wasn't a normal Wilbur death threat. This wasn't normal Wilbur or Ghostbur for that matter. It wasn't even really a mix, or at least not just a mix.

Ghostbur was a perpetual 8-year-old even if his visage now aged with his physical body. He was soft and often silly like a young child. His thoughts tended to spill out without much filter, and he was not good at lying (the situation with Tommy notwithstanding). Mostly, he made himself willfully forget negative things, focusing instead on the positives. There was always something missing from him. Most of the time, he was little more than a dream.

Then, there was normal Wilbur, who he was when he was awake. The Wilbur with calloused fingertips from years of guitar playing and a burn scar on his right thumb from where he was fucking around with fireworks one time. He was a man who could never shut up, wanted to touch everything (including things he well knew he shouldn't), and could get possessive over a chair of all things. He had a silver tongue with and without his powers and often would manage to get what he wanted before his target even realized he was trying to get it. He was so very alive, and often could get lost in

that fact. He never quite forgot, but he shoved away memories of the past whenever he could, preferring to embrace the highs and lows of the present.

And then, there was this Wilbur that was sitting next to Technoblade in the car now. He was someone who was around very rarely, seen most often in flashes of eyes and tilts of the head. Often, he came and left in little moments, but when he decided to linger longer, it was usually in wounds that bled blue before they bled red. He was a plague of destruction that could obliterate his target if he so chose, and he would choose so with no hesitation or remorse if given reason. Technoblade had felt his ire before as it passed over him gently and slaughtered everyone else in the room. He was the part of Wilbur that remembered everything and was everything that came with that knowledge.

Now, Technoblade hesitated, honestly wondering if he should let Wilbur go on this mission if that version of him was so close to the surface. Yet, then, the moment of Other Wilbur passed as the man's eyes caught on something in front of them.

"What the fuck is that?" Wilbur asked.

Technoblade turned to face forward only to see the city skyline, but not quite as it normally was. "That's a good question," Techno said slowly. The buildings were not quite their normal shapes and also appeared to be mostly green. They exchanged a quick glance before Wilbur returned his attention to the road and continued to drive... until driving wasn't an option anymore. They ended up parked at the city limits, but instead of the landscape changing from forest to city like it usually did, it seemed to change from forest to jungle.

"Oh... Tubbo," Wilbur said.

Techno glanced over at him. "You think Tommy's roommate did this?"

"He has plant powers and he'd quit the Guild in rage when Ghostbur went to check on him two nights ago."

Technoblade studied the huge trees that had cracked the pavement of the road in front of them and the vines climbing up the sides of skyscrapers. He thought back to the boy who'd dared to attack the three of them with mushrooms, which notably were not plants and thus would be much harder to manipulate. "Yeah," Techno said, "that tracks."

"How far into the city is The Vault?" Wilbur asked.

"You want to try to walk *that*?"

Wilbur looked up into the sky, and Techno followed his gaze to see a flying superhero engulfed in flames high in the sky. The superhero was shooting fire at some of the vines on a skyscraper. As they watched, the vine reached out and grabbed them, pulling them in towards the building. "Well," Wilbur said. "I'd imagine they're all distracted right now. Plus, Tommy's not going to be getting in our way. So, easy picking."

"Until the plants attack us."

"We won't touch them," Wilbur said, typing something into his phone. "The Vault's only a 15-minute walk from here, and Niki's is on the way if we need a pitstop."

"The last time plants took over this city, they were filled with zombie spores. I didn't like turning into a zombie."

Wilbur winced, “Yeah, I’m glad Phil can’t remember that one.”

“Fresh zombies are still somewhat alive and sentient for at least 5 days, Wilbur. I didn’t want to experience that.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“You see why I don’t want to go in there, then?”

Wilbur leaned back into his seat and looked at him. “Niki’s has fancy coffee, though.”

“...Would she even be open if this is happening?”

Wilbur had already keyed up a number on his phone. He hit the call button and pressed his phone to his ear with an eyeroll. “She lives above the bakery,” he reminded as he waited. “Niki!” he greeted when she picked up. “Are you open... are you willing to be for a friend?” He nodded and put his hand over the microphone, turning to Techno. “What do you want?”

Fucking. Manipulative. Bastard. Why did he have to know Technoblade so well? “A mint chocolate mocha.”

“A mint chocolate mocha and an iced coffee,” Wilbur said into the phone. “Also, can we get a loaf of French bread? We’ll have to pick it up on our way back, but the coffee will be on our first pass, else I don’t think Techno’ll be getting out of the car... Yeah, we’ll be there in about 10. Thanks!” He hung up and smiled at Techno.

Techno rolled his eyes and opened the car door.

“Whatever you do,” Wilbur cautioned as he also got out of the car, “don’t touch any plants.”

“Thanks for the tip,” Techno said dryly.

“No, seriously, the trees growing everywhere are called Sandbox Trees. The sap can blind you and the fruit explodes and spews seeds at 150 miles per hour.”

Techno eyed the nearest tree with suspicion “Wilbur if I die from tree, I’m going to kill you.”

Wilbur just laughed and bumped their shoulder together briefly before leading the way down the familiar, but currently very strange looking street. It took them a bit longer than 10 minutes to get to Niki’s bakery as they had to weave around trees and hop over bushes while being careful not to touch anything.

There were, understandably, not many people out and about on the streets. They did see a few superheroes flying through the air, some on their own power and some... obviously not.

“Good day not to be a superhero,” Techno noted as he gave what appeared to be a giant Venus flytrap a lot of space.

“Ah, the benefits of not being legally and morally responsible for city wide topiary,” Wilbur replied. He made it to the door of Niki’s bakery and knocked on the glass. Niki’s face appeared a moment later, and she unlocked the door to let them in. Wilbur had to bend over amusingly far to give her a brief hug on his way inside.

“It’s on the counter,” she told Techno over Wilbur’s shoulder.

Honestly, she was the only useful human being on the planet besides Phil, and she had the benefit of knowing the difference between an americano and a macchiato.

“You look tired,” Wilbur commented as Techno took a sip of coffee.

“Yeah, well,” she sighed, pushing her hair out of her face. “It’s been a bit of an eventful morning.”

“I’m assuming because of the jungle outside,” Wilbur guessed.

“Yeah,” she confirmed. “Whatever’s been going on has been having a big effect on the secret community gardens. I’ve been trying to help out where I can all morning.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Well...” she said, moving to stand behind the counter, “good and bad news. The good news is, everyone who needs food from the garden has plenty. The bad news is...” She bent over and grabbed something from under the counter and pulled out a strawberry the size of a watermelon. “We have to find places to hide these.”

“That edible?” Technoblade asked.

She nodded. “But, they’re growing so fast we have to constantly harvest them or they risk spilling out onto the street where someone might see. Plus, we don’t know what to do with them all. We’re risking people’s houses and businesses trying to stash them.”

“Well, the heroes and cops are distracted right now. If you can hide it all until the roads are cleared, we’ll bring a truck around,” Wilbur offered. “We’ll get stuff canned and dried to redistribute through the winter.”

“When the roads are cleared,” she said. “Who knows when that’ll be though. We don’t even know what this supervillain wants.”

Wilbur coughed. “Yeah,” he said. “I’m sure it’ll be handled soon.”

Niki raised an eyebrow. “Have you seen the Guild’s heroes getting tossed around the city like it’s a game of hacky sack?”

“Who said anything about the Guild?” Wilbur asked, grabbing his own coffee from the counter.

“I will have no part in cutting down the exploding trees,” Techno said.

“No, but we can probably convince Mushroom Boy to stop making them.”

Oh? Technoblade thought. Are we stealing that one too? ...Again.

“Mushroom Boy?” Niki asked.

“Long story,” Wilbur said. “It’ll settle in a couple of days though, I’m sure. For now, we actually have some business in the city.”

Them having nondescript ‘business’ wasn’t exactly out of the norm for them, so she just waved them off. “I’ll have the bread packed up by the time you get back.”

“Should only take half an hour,” Wilbur said, “less with how distracted a certain group of people are.”

“I’ll be here trying to figure out how many strawberry muffins I can make with one of these.”

Wilbur laughed. “See you in a bit Niki,” he said, turning towards the door.

“You make coffee well,” Technoblade told her, following Wilbur.

“I appreciate you as a human being too, Technoblade,” she said, her amused voice following them out onto the street.

“Sometimes I think you like her more than me,” Wilbur sniffed once the door closed. “Is it the pink hair? I can dye my hair pink.”

“Would that make you take more or less time in the bathroom in the morning?”

“It literally doesn’t affect you anymore.”

“You literally take all of the hot water.”

“You literally always shower before me.”

“I literally have to listen to Phil complain 4 days a week. Also, where are we going?”

“Three blocks west. Two blocks north. Do you and Phil talk about me behind my back?”

Technoblade felt himself grin. “Yes.” Wilbur screwed up his face to glare at him which reminded him. “We should probably think about masking up soon.”

Wilbur nodded and whistled softly. “No one’s close enough around here to see,” he said, “and any cameras around are covered in vines. Might as well do it now.”

It was quick work transitioning from could-pass-as-civilians wear to supervillain wear: a coat and mask for Will and a cloak, mask, and crown for Techno. Then, they were once again walking down the street, but this time as Whippoorwill and the Blade.

They arrived at the Vault in only a couple of minutes, throwing their empty coffee cups in a wastebasket on the corner. They were supervillains; they didn’t litter. The Vault had been low on their list of places to snatch a suppression orb from. The location was where backup equipment for the Superhero Guild was kept, and it was in close proximity to the Guild HQ itself. It was always very securely guarded by normal security guards as well as a couple of middle ranked heroes, and backup from the rest of the Guild was close if needed. It would be a headache to break into. Usually.

Today, however, there were two security guards by the main entrance who didn’t even seem to realize they were supervillains until about two seconds after Technoblade had one of them at sword point. They looked... mostly tired.

“T-there’s not even anything left in there today,” the one at sword point stuttered. “They literally took all of the weapons to fight the demon plants.”

“Good thing we’re not here for a weapon,” Wilbur said. Then, “you look like you need a nap, buddy.” Wilbur whistled softly to knock both of the guards out and they keeled over with no signs of resistance.

“Well, this is going to be boring,” Technoblade said, sheathing his sword.

“And here I was hoping Dream himself would show up, so I could rip his spine out of his ears,” Wilbur said, again with that calm serious lilt that meant he was genuine. He swiped one of the guard’s cards to swipe.

The security today was laughable, and walking the halls was no more treacherous than walking through the woods outside their house. In fact, it was significantly less treacherous than the roads they’d walked to get here because of the lack of dangerous foliage. All they found was a skeleton crew of non-powered workers that seemed very uninterested in engaging with them if they even noticed they weren’t supposed to be there considering how many people had been in and out that day.

“Boring,” Technoblade reiterated when they made it to the atrium over the main vault area. The main vault set 10 feet under the atrium and in order to get to the actual door, one had to go through a pool of lava, which was why they’d stolen fire resistance potions. However, today, someone had simply... forgotten to put the lava pool back apparently. They’d probably not wanted to have to deal with it as superheroes ran in and out for supplies.

“You could go fight a giant Venus flytrap,” Wilbur suggested.

“I’m bored, not stupid,” Techno scoffed.

“Debatable,” Wilbur said as he hopped down into the pit that was usually filled with lava to get to the door.

Technoblade stayed at the top to watch for potential threats just in case. “At least I know rosemary can’t compliment steaks considering dried leaves aren’t sentient,” he called.

“Oh, yeah, well at least I know not to use cotton thread to stitch up a bullet wound.”

Techno narrowed his eyes. “We don’t talk about that.”

“I’m surprised I wasn’t able to rip my way through the veil to scream at you right then and there. You’re lucky Phil caught the infection. That would have been a painful way to go.”

“I was 17 and didn’t know any better. No one bothered to give me any medical training in the Pit.”

“I was 20 and it was a meaningless typo in a text message,” Wilbur returned. “Also, this place is fucking empty. They were not kidding about needing all of the weapons to fight the plants.”

Techno tilted his head. “I think I like Tubbo.”

“He’s a good kid,” Wilbur replied. “A bit bullheaded and I could tell he had a wild streak before plant Armageddon. We should probably get him back to Tommy before he learns we live in a forest.”

Technoblade definitely noticed that they were getting Tubbo to Tommy and not the other way around. “Do you think he could get a coffee tree to grow in a temperate zone?”

“Is that literally all you think about?” Wilbur said with a laugh as he walked back out of the door.

“I also think about knives sometimes,” Techno said offering him a hand up to get out of the not-so-lava pit.

“Don’t forget Greek mythology,” he said, landing next to Techno. He grabbed the orb he’d gotten from his pocket and showed it to Techno before pocketing it again. “Though, I’m pretty sure half of learning about that is so you can be a pretentious asshole.”

“Yes, I’m the pretentious one here,” Techno replied. “Clearly.”

“I’m glad you agree,” he said with a little smirk. He turned to walk back the way they’d come. Techno wordlessly reached forward and ran his hand through his hair exactly against the natural flow of the strands. “No! My *hair*.”

“Oh no,” Techno said as monotone as possible. “Now your hair is messy messy instead of purposefully messy.”

“Die,” he hissed, his voice menacing and dark and with exactly zero power behind it.

Techno shrugged. “Shove me into the exploding tree. It’ll be a new way to go.”

Wilbur laughed. “Break up the monotony.”

“Break up the monotony,” he agreed as they headed back towards the entrance of the building.

The car ride home was significantly less tense than the one to the city. Wilbur had settled a bit and Techno even had gotten a second coffee from Niki and was holding a loaf of French bread in his lap that he’d realized belatedly was clearly for the kid with his lumpy bread aversion. They pulled into the garage, but didn’t send the car into the basement, instead getting out and using the side door that led into the kitchen.

Where they immediately caught Phil pouring a concoction of sugar and caffeine (also known as a Coca Cola) into a tall glass.

Wilbur immediately had his arms crossed over his chest like he was the parent scolding his child. “Phil, please tell me you aren’t about to feed *that* to Tommy.”

“...He likes it,” Phil said.

“You can’t just give him everything he likes.” He glared at Phil. “Wait, you’ve already given him one? How many?”

“...This would be the third.”

“We left you alone for 2 hours.”

“He didn’t like the coffee!”

“You gave him coffee too?!”

“I’d promised him he could try it.”

“*Dad*.”

Technoblade quickly decided he was tired of just standing in the doorway while they were arguing, and so he pushed Wilbur slightly to the side in order to go take a seat at the table. Wilbur didn’t even seem to notice.

“Look, he was crying,” Phil said. “I had to do something.”

That immediately tore Wilbur's attention away from caffeinated beverages. "He was crying? Why was he crying?"

"I honestly have no idea," Phil said with a sigh. "We were talking. He asked where you two went, and I went ahead and told him you were grabbing the suppression orb. I wanted to maybe get him to see our point of view, so I briefly explained what we wanted to use it for, but then he broke down sobbing out of nowhere."

"Why would that upset him?" Wilbur fretted. "Are you sure you didn't say anything else?"

"I'm sure that's all I said. I have no idea why he reacted like that. Maybe he's just stressed. I don't know. I just wanted to make him rethink some things about the Guild, not cause a mental breakdown."

Technoblade looked over at the two of them working themselves up over the mental health of the child locked in their basement. He sighed. "Okay," he interrupted, drawing their attention. "Putting aside whatever made him break down for now since he's fine now, I'm just going to come out and say it. We are obviously keeping the kid. We can't just keep him in our basement forever. What are we doing with him?"

"He won't stay without Tubbo," Wilbur said immediately.

"Right, what are we doing with them?"

"Obvious," Wilbur said. "Phil's office becomes another bedroom since he never uses it anyway. Tommy and Tubbo wouldn't want to be separated, so they'll be fine with just one room. We still have the two twin mattresses from the last house. We can slide them together and put a bridge pad on them for now, but it'll give them the option of separating the beds down the line if they'd like."

"Whoa," Phil said. "I think we're getting a little ahead of ourselves."

Wilbur turned to pout at him.

"Tommy is a sentient human being, not a cat you found on the side of the road, Will," Phil pointed out. "We literally kidnapped him with intent to hold him for ransom. It's not going to be that easy. We're going to have to figure out how to overcome that and ask him to stay willingly."

"Just take off the cuff," Technoblade said, "and say look here's a bed and some food. Problem solved."

Phil pinched the bridge of his nose. "Yes, that worked on you Technoblade, but I don't think the same strategy will apply here."

"It might," Techno said, bristling a bit.

"It might actually," Wilbur interjected. "The Guild hasn't treated him particularly well. They don't even pay him minimum wage. He's a level 1.5 hero because giving him level 2 let alone the one he deserves would mean he'd be acknowledged as an actual hero. Not to mention everything Dream does."

Phil tilted his head. "Ghostbur let you remember?"

Wilbur nodded. "Apparently I deemed myself nice enough to Tommy to give myself a migraine made of almost a years' worth of memories this morning. Ghostbur is a dick."

“The point is bed, food, freedom,” Techno said.

“With maybe a bit more subtlety than Technoblade,” Wilbur said. “He’s not a stupid kid or a blind follower. If we explain why we do what we do and offer him a better life for him and Tubbo, I think he’ll take it. Tubbo will follow.”

“Well,” Phil said. “You certainly know them better than me. We’ll talk to him more about what we do and see how he reacts. We should also actually turn the office into a bedroom, so he has a place to stay before we offer him a place to stay. Preferably something that isn’t just a couple of beds.”

“Actually,” Wilbur said. “About that.”

“What the hell Will?” Techno asked. Wilbur had taken them to his bedroom and presented them with bags and bags of items. There was everything from clothing in two different sizes to desk lamps to posters of things Technoblade didn’t recognize. He had enough room decor stuffed into the corners of his room that they could probably fill a room and a half with it all.

“Ghostbur may have stolen my credit card a couple of times,” Wilbur said sheepishly.

“W-well,” Phil said. “That’s a head start on one part of the plan.”

Chapter End Notes

Techno and Wilbur: Why calmly confirm with each other that we are fine from the other room when instead we can bully each other relentlessly?

Also, I would like you to know that a caffeinated Tommy is currently wreaking havoc downstairs, completely oblivious to the possibility that the conversation upstairs could even happen.

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy was no longer injured. He had decided that this was true. Because he was no longer injured, he was done with lazing around in bed all day. These decisions had nothing to do with the fact that Phil had been gone too long and sitting in bed with his thoughts about Phil, Wilbur, Technoblade, The Guild, and the Pit was quickly driving him up the wall (figuratively, unfortunately). He needed to do something that wasn't just consuming movies, but there wasn't anything to do in here. All he had at his disposal was three chairs and a bed to entertain himself. Yet, Tommy was nothing if not innovative, so he'd work with what he had.

Tommy carefully shifted his weight completely onto one of the chairs he'd balanced on the bed. He'd taken the three chairs and made a pyramid on top of the mattress with two on the bottom level and one stacked on top of those. Said pyramid wobbled dangerously for a moment before he was able to stabilize himself. Once all of his weight was on the bottom set of chairs, he slowly picked up the foot resting against the mattress and pulled it in until he was kneeling fully on the chairs. Success!

He then turned his attention to the top chair. He set a hand on the seat, pushing down to test how it might move and to keep everything in place as he slowly exchanged one knee for a foot and then the other. Cautiously, he pushed himself up, leaning carefully to keep most of his weight on the middle of the stack. The tower didn't topple, so he shifted gradually until he was able to settle into the chair. He puffed out a breath once the stack stopped shaking, and then carefully moved into a more comfortable position.

Ow.

He meant, not ow, because he wasn't injured anymore at all whatsoever. Balancing on top of things he probably shouldn't was a normal Tommy activity and doing it today did not hurt at all because his body was 100% up to normal standards. Of course, he usually did things like this with his powers available so he wouldn't have to worry about falling. Yet, he rarely needed to fall back on his powers anymore with all of his practice, and this was just three chairs stacked on a bed. The benefits of doing things and being high far outweighed the risk of the whole tower tumbling down and him cracking his skull. He had a good chance of just falling on the bed anyway.

He pulled out the stuffed cow that he'd shoved between the t-shirt and the neck of his sweater for the climb up and settled it on his lap with a smile. He kicked his feet, and the stack went *wobble wobble*, but it was a controlled type of wobble that simply made him grin. He pulled up his legs onto the chair so he could sit criss-cross.

Ow.

...

Not ow.

He sighed. Phil had been gone a while getting his next Coca-Cola. He really liked the soda. It was his favorite soda, though this wasn't a hard rank for it to achieve as he hadn't had any other type of soda. It was much better than the coffee Phil had tried to poison him with before it. (He was pretty sure it wasn't actually poison despite how bitter it was since Phil ended up drinking it himself, but it was still

an affront to tastebuds everywhere. How could something smell so good but taste so bad?) The soda, on the other hand, was the opposite of bitter. It was sweet and strangely bubbly in a way that made his stomach feel kind of weird, but in a fun way.

Finally, the door opened, but Tommy was disappointed to see that instead of Phil coming in with a soda, it was Technoblade holding a bag, with no visible drinkable liquid in hand.

He stopped upon entering the room and stared up at Tommy. Ha! Tommy was taller than him!

“What are you doing?” Technoblade asked.

“Being high,” Tommy replied. Technoblade walked over to the bed and reached up to put a hand on the back of the chair. Hmm, well, that was a bit boring, but it was also a good substitute for Tommy’s lack of powers if anything went wrong. Tommy had to turn in the chair to look down at him. “Is your crown in that bag?” he asked. He knew he’d been out supervillaining and Tommy wasn’t sure what else could be in his bag but parts of his costume.

“Yes.”

“Can I have it?”

“No.”

Tommy frowned at him. “But I want to be king, Technoblade.”

“No.”

Tommy settled his chin on the back of the chair and peered down at him. “...Can I have it though?”

There was one second, two, and then Technoblade sighed. He pulled his crown out of the bag with his free hand, honestly to Tommy’s shock. His surprise didn’t keep him from snatching it as soon as it was within reach though. He eagerly put it on his head. It was a bit loose on him, but it mostly fit fine. He wondered if it was specially made for Technoblade, because this would certainly slip off of Tommy’s head in a fight, but it had never fallen off of the supervillain.

“This is only because I’m supposed to make you like me,” he heard Technoblade mumble.

Tommy narrowed his eyes at that in suspicion. “What?”

“Nothing. How long are you plannin’ to stay up there?”

“I am king,” Tommy replied.

“That’s not an answer, Tommy.”

“Yes, it is.”

“Wilbur was going to be down in a couple of minutes.”

“Is that a warning?”

“He’s not going to be happy about you risking cracking your head open.”

“I’m not risking cracking my head open!” Tommy exclaimed. “I’m Mr. Tommy Balancer Extraordinaire! Wilbur is a fusspot and can fuck off.”

The door beeped right then. “I almost asked if you were willing to say that to his face,” Technoblade said blandly, “but then I remembered who you are.”

The door opened fully, and Wilbur’s eyes immediately widened at the sight of the Tommy Tower. “No, no, no, what the hell do you think you’re doing?!”

“You’re a fusspot that can fuck off,” Tommy replied.

“Techno!” Wilbur said, noticing Techno behind Tommy. He had something in his hands which he set on the floor in favor of wringing them.

“He’s Mr. Tommy Balancer Extraordinaire,” Techno said with so little inflection in his voice that Tommy almost did fall off the chair and die.

“And king!” Tommy reminded, laughing.

“And king,” Technoblade amended.

“Get down from there right now!” Wilbur ordered.

“But Wilbur,” he whined. “I like getting high.”

Wilbur seemed torn between laughing at Tommy, murdering Tommy, or murdering Technoblade. “If you get off now,” Wilbur said. “I’ll let you keep Techno’s crown for the rest of the day.”

“Heh?”

“Even if it’s over his dead body,” Wilbur continued sweetly.

Tommy mulled it over. “Deal,” he said, and hopped off the top of his tower onto the bed. There was a shriek from Wilbur and a concerned grunting sound from Techno. Two pairs of arms were bracketing him in by the time he landed (perfectly he might add despite the... totally not sting from his stab wound). He rolled his eyes at them both.

“Bastard gremlin child,” Wilbur spat.

“I can handle a stack of chairs, idiot,” Tommy said while batting at the arms around him. Techno removed his, but Wilbur decidedly did not. In fact, the next thing he knew, his feet were swept off the bed. “No! You fuck!” Tommy yelled, shoving at his captor’s face.

“You’ve lost leg privileges,” Wilbur informed him.

“If I had a knife, I would stab you with it!” Tommy proclaimed, smacking his shoulder. He refused to be held like a baby. He was not a baby! “If I had my powers, I would beat you up!”

“Mmhmm Toms,” Wilbur replied like he doubted it. Tommy was deposited onto the bed on his back. Apparently, Technoblade had returned the chairs to the floor, because the bed was now tragically Tommy Towerless.

Tommy immediately popped into a sitting position. “No bed,” he insisted.

“Yes bed,” Wilbur said with a frown, reaching to shove his shoulder back down.

No, Tommy decided. *No. Bed*. He bent his neck to lick Wilbur’s wrist.

“Gross!” Wilbur said, jerking away, and Tommy made his great escape, rolling (totally not ouch) towards the opposite side of the bed, Techno’s crown in hand since it had fallen off when he’d been laid down. The stuffed cow remained on the bed for now. He ducked to dodge Technoblade’s arm as soon as his feet hit the floor and went scrambling in the opposite direction.

He came to a stop behind one of the newly placed chairs and stuck his tongue out in Wilbur’s direction. “No bed.”

“Tommy,” said Wilbur, and Tommy wasn’t sure why he thought putting on his scary voice would make Tommy more inclined to go to him. Really, using that voice just activated Tommy’s scam-the-supervillains-out-of-my-dead-body instincts. It was a little different since he was definitely eventually going to get caught when locked up in this room without his powers, but they’d also promised not to murder him so his inevitable capture probably wouldn’t end in his bloody, painful death. “Techno,” Wilbur complained.

Technoblade looked over at Tommy, and he should probably look scary even without the mask, but he mostly just looked tired. “Are you going to make me come get you?”

Tommy stuck his tongue out at him this time. Technoblade sighed and stepped towards him and the chair.

Not this time fucker, Tommy thought when he got close. He kicked the chair into Technoblade’s shins and darted past him.

“So, he learns,” Technoblade said.

“Yeah! I’m smart bitch!” He stuck the crown back on his head. Unfortunately, he was distracted by the praise and almost didn’t notice Technoblade approaching again until it was too late. Tommy’s eyes widened. He feigned right, then feigned left, then actually did go right, and oh there was Wilbur time to go over the bed.

“Why?” Wilbur asked sounding like he was the one in pain (no Tommy was not implying sliding over the bed hurt him, shut up). “Why are you so slippery, and why are you so stubborn?!”

“Talent!” Tommy declared, hopping twice, and smothering his disappointment when gravity pulled him back down far too soon.

Technoblade looked at him for a brief moment, and then he was vaulting over the bed like it was nothing, his hand and nothing else touching the mattress. Tommy shrieked and ran around the edge of the bed. “Cheating! Cheating! That’s got to be cheating!” He managed to dance out of Wilbur’s reaching arms.

“Is it?” Technoblade asked, a touch of amusement in his voice.

“This is not a game,” Wilbur said when Tommy took refuge behind another one of the chairs.

“Is so,” Tommy insisted. “If I win, no bed. If you win, no bed.”

“Seems like a fair deal to me,” commented Technoblade. Tommy grinned at him.

“No,” Wilbur said. “Bed.”

“Exactly,” Tommy said, his smile full of teeth.

“That’s not what I was saying, and you know it, you little gremlin!”

Tommy cackled even while Wilbur lunged at him. Wilbur was a bit slower, so he was pretty easy and fun to dodge especially with the way his eyebrows pinched in agitation every time his fingertips just barely brushed Tommy. It was hilarious except... he sorta... forgot... that Technoblade was there.

He jerked away from Wilbur once more and his back hit a solid wall of flesh. His eyes widened as something malicious flashed in Wilbur’s eyes. “...C’m on guys. We can talk about this.”

“Can we?” Technoblade asked, voice low and coming from behind him.

“I... well...,” Tommy stuttered just nervously enough for Wilbur’s eyes to soften before he screamed. “Nope!” and went straight down, rolling to the side. Now, he was 100% sure Technoblade was just playing along at this point because he totally could have caught him, but he still laughed at Wilbur’s sputtering.

However, Tommy was honestly out of breath at this point and didn’t quite feel like popping back up, so he ended up staying on the floor.

“Finished?” Technoblade asked.

“I think it’s clear enough that I won,” Tommy panted. “So, we might as well end it here.” He propped himself up on his elbows to point severely at Wilbur. “No bed.”

“You’re planning to just lay on the floor?” Wilbur asked.

“Yes, it’s much better than the bed. I’m sick of the stupid bed.” He flopped back onto the floor.

“Well,” Technoblade drawled. “At least he’s still.”

Suddenly, Tommy was blinded as a blanket fell on his head. He sputtered and shoved the blanket out of his face only to see Technoblade hovering over him with another blanket in hand.

“Dick,” Tommy mumbled through a mouthful of fabric. He crossed his arms and refused to remove the blanket just for him to do it again. Yet, this did not deter him or Wilbur apparently because after a few seconds, something else fell on his head. By the feel of it, it was a pillow. He stubbornly did not move even as more pillows and blankets smacked into him from all sides, burying him in a pile he honestly wasn’t sure he could easily get out of on his own.

Eventually, they must have run out of things to throw at him (or at least they ran out of soft things. They could have thrown a chair or two at him, but apparently Tommy hadn’t pushed enough to make their ire run that deep.) because the onslaught stopped.

After a few more moments, Tommy could feel hands digging through the pile near his head. He had plenty of time to put the meanest glower on his face possible before Wilbur peeled back the last layer of blanket from his head. “I have done nothing to deserve this treatment,” he informed the man’s stupid smiling face.

“Oh really?” he asked skeptically.

“I have done nothing wrong ever.”

“I beg to differ,” Wilbur said.

“You’re just morally corrupt,” Tommy sniffed, “so you think my righteousness is criminal.”

Wilbur scoffed. “Just take your cow, Tommy,” Wilbur said, shoving the stuffed animal in his face. Tommy had to wiggle to get an arm out and take it.

“So, how about a movie?” Wilbur asked.

“No,” Tommy groaned. “No more movies. Too many movies. My brain is going to melt. I want to *do* something. I’m *bored*.”

“I could get you a book,” Wilbur offered.

Tommy scrunched his nose up. “Gross.”

Wilbur pursed his lips before his eyes lit with an absolutely evil spark. “How about a coloring book?”

Tommy smacked him in the shoulder with the cow plushie.

“Aw, a coloring book and crayons for baby. Tech, do you think he knows how to color in the lines yet?”

“I’m not a baby!” Tommy shrieked, smacking him twice more.

“A little baby,” Wilbur declared, and he unfortunately could very easily reach forward to bop Tommy on the nose since one of Tommy’s arms was still pinned. Tommy snapped his teeth at the retreating finger in warning for future attempts.

“...I’m just going to go get the PlayStation,” Technoblade said.

“Oh, that’s actually a good idea,” Wilbur said, lighting up a bit.

Tommy narrowed his eyes in suspicion. “Is that one of those, like, play kitchen set things for babies.”

Wilbur snorted out a startled laugh at his question. “Yes!” he said. “Technoblade totally stayed up 80 hours straight in the 7th grade to complete his playthrough of putting plastic eggs onto a plastic stove.”

“It’s a video game console,” Technoblade explained as he moved towards the door. “Though, I did, admittedly, put 12 hours into Cooking Mama.”

“To be fair, that was a *long* car ride,” Wilbur said.

Technoblade just hummed an affirmation as he closed the door behind him.

Wilbur turned back to Tommy and Tommy bared his teeth at him in warning, but the teasing spark in his eyes had faded. “You didn’t hurt yourself, did you?” he asked.

“No,” Tommy li-truthed.

“You wouldn’t happen to be lying to me, would you?” There was a hint of a threat to his tone that made Tommy shiver even though he wasn’t sure what was being threatened. What the hell would he be threatening if he was worried Tommy was hurt? That he’d hurt Tommy more if he was hurt because he didn’t want Tommy to be hurt? That didn’t make sense.

“No,” Tommy said.

“Let me see,” Wilbur ordered, tone firm.

“I’ll bite you,” Tommy hissed.

“Mmm,” Wilbur acknowledged, and then the blanket he’d removed from Tommy’s face was flipped back over his head.

“Hey!” Tommy protested, but it was no use. He was at a clear disadvantage tangled up in the blankets as he was. He did try to kick, but it was at most half-hearted. If he was being honest, checking the stab wound out just in case was... maybe... possibly... a good idea... if one was being an overly cautious wanker.

The blankets around him shifted until he could feel Wilbur’s fingers pushing up the sweater and t-shirt to expose the wound. “Well, you didn’t tear any stitches at least,” Wilbur sighed.

“I didn’t?” Tommy asked, surprised. He flopped the blanket covering his eyes off to look at him.

Wilbur glared at him. “You still should be taking it easy. You’re getting pain meds.”

“Nooo.”

“Yes,” Wilbur said as he took out his phone. “At least take some ibuprofen or something if you don’t want to be tired. I’m texting Techno to bring some down.”

“But pills suck,” he groaned, propping himself up on his elbows. “I am not weak. I am a big strong man!”

Wilbur looked at him all weird. “Humor me?”

Tommy frowned. He did not like pills, not at all, but this injury had been hurting for longer and worse than any injury he could remember since leaving The Pit. It was starting to grate a bit on his usually strong constitution. “Fine,” he relented, “but you must release me from blanket hell and help me find the crown again.”

“Deal,” Wilbur said with a smile, and started to dig Tommy out of the pile. Tommy found the crown on his way out and stuck it back on his head. “Here,” Wilbur said. “You can sit on this blanket so you’re not directly on the floor.” Tommy scooted over onto the newly spread-out blanket. “Also, I brought you something to drink.”

Tommy frowned when Wilbur grabbed the small thermos he’d set down upon entering the room.

“This is not a Coca Cola,” he grumbled.

“Nope,” Wilbur confirmed. “It’s a cinnamon apple herbal tea. No caffeine and a lot less sugar, but there is some honey.”

Tommy scrunched up his nose. “Sounds horrible.”

“Just try it.”

Tommy made a show of grumbling about it, but he did find himself curious about the new drink, so he took a sip. Wilbur looked far too smug about the look that must have crossed Tommy’s face.

“You’re ugly,” Tommy hissed and took another sip. “This is not as good as Coke.”

“But you might actually sleep tonight if you drink it,” Wilbur replied already going back to work stacking pillows around Tommy. “Help me arrange this stuff,” he requested.

By the time Technoblade returned with the ‘PlayStation,’ they’d rearranged the blankets into a more comfortable pile on the floor.

“How many blankets do you people even have in your house?” Tommy wondered after going through the mortifying agony of swallowing the pills Technoblade had brought down. “I’m pretty sure this is more blankets than I’ve ever owned total.”

“You do realize that is a concerning fact, right?” Technoblade asked nonchalantly from where he was hooking up the PlayStation. “Tell that to Phil, and your room will be filled with blankets from floor to ceiling.”

“Philza is going to break into my apartment to fill my bedroom with blankets?” Tommy asked, confused.

“Sure,” Technoblade said. “Speaking of. Phil’s almost done with the furniture moving and said you’re responsible for the rest,” he said to Wilbur.

“Why is he moving furniture?” Tommy asked.

“Home renovations.”

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him. “Is this a secret code?” he asked. “Are you doing crime?”

“No.”

“I think you’re doing crime,” Tommy said.

Wilbur just laughed at him even though his theory was totally rational. He reached over to ruffle Tommy’s hair as he stood up. “I’ll be back later. Enjoy your game.”

He left the room, and Technoblade walked over to him. “Here,” he said, thrusting a device into Tommy’s hands before taking a seat next to him in the blanket pile. “I assume you don’t know how to use a PlayStation controller since you didn’t know what a PlayStation was.”

Tommy shook his head, and Technoblade quickly gave him a rundown of what all of the buttons on the controller did, leaning over to point at each one.

“Push that button to start,” Technoblade said. Tommy did and an animation started playing on the TV of a clock ticking before the name ‘Chrono Trigger’ appeared on the screen. Then, a screen with a guy’s face and a keyboard popped up.

Tommy looked at Technoblade questioningly.

“You can name the main character,” he explained, “or just keep the default one.”

“How do I change it?” he asked.

“Here.” Technoblade reached over to guide his fingers to the right buttons. Unfortunately, there was only enough space for a 5-letter name. After much deliberation, he named the character ‘Harry.’

After pushing enter, another animation began to play, and the character's mom started talking. Tommy didn't really read all of the text that popped up, but he got that she was waking him up in the morning. His character eventually got out of bed, and Tommy could start controlling him. Unfortunately, it quickly became clear Tommy didn't quite know what he was doing with the controller still, and Techno had to help him just to get out of the door of the house and onto the main map. At least he was patient with Tommy's failing even after having to fully take the controller a couple of times. Eventually, he ended up reaching his arm around Tommy so he could help guide him around and silently take the controller whenever he needed more help than that.

Yet, using the controller wasn't actually the main problem Tommy was having. No, he was already slowly starting to figure that one out; he just needed a bit of practice with the new device. No, the main problem was... there was a lot of character dialogue, but... they weren't actually talking like in a movie. He was... he was supposed to read the text that came across the screen to get what the story was about as well as instructions on gameplay. Uh, but the text went... really fast and, sure, he *could* pause to try and actually read it, but his cheeks were already burning just at the thought of how much time he'd have to stare at the screen. He was already doing so bad; he couldn't just show Technoblade that he was stupid outside of the game mechanics too. So, he ended up just spamming 'X' to skip through pretty much all of the dialogue.

Despite these difficulties, the beginning of the game was actually pretty fun. He went around the town looting through chests to get money and was even able to buy a gun from the store! It was very cool! Yet, more and more problems arose as things started... happening. He didn't... he didn't really know *what* was happening because he wasn't reading what the characters were saying, but things were definitely happening. He was also pretty sure he was missing some fundamental things about how to do things like win fights.

"You know," Technoblade said, "if you actually read the dialogue instead of skipping though it, you might get hints about where to go and how to play the game."

"Reading's for chumps," Tommy declared, his ears burning a bit. Surely if he just smashed random keys, he'd eventually manage to kill the monsters.

"You're missing the entire story," Technoblade said. "This is an RPG. A role-playing game. The dialogue is pretty much the point."

Tommy just turned slightly to give the man sitting behind him a glower, frustrated when the last character on his team died again. "Well, the story's stupid. This game's stupid."

"Hmm," replied Technoblade, looking at the death screen. Then he looked at Tommy and the glare still directed at him. "Can you read?" he asked curiously.

"Of course, I can, dickhead!" Tommy blew up immediately. "Why the fuck wouldn't I know how to read?!"

Technoblade shrugged, unperturbed by Tommy's yelling. "I couldn't read at your age," he said.

That made Tommy pause. "W-well I can!" he said, but then deflated a little bit, looking down at the controller in his lap. "Just not really fast or any of the hard words."

Technoblade reached forward to take the controller from him. "We're not far into the game," he said. "Why don't we head back to the beginning. I'll read the dialogue and instructions out loud for you, and you can practice the fighting and learn the story."

“I...” Tommy said, “Maybe?”

Without another word on the subject, Techno exited out of the game they were in and started a brand new one. He handed the controller back to Tommy once more as the title screen animation played.

It did end up being a lot more enjoyable knowing what was going on, Techno’s voice telling him everything that was said on screen as well as slotting in some of his own suggestions to give Tommy a leg up since it was his first time playing something. Even when Techno still had to take the controller for some of the harder bosses, he still found himself having fun.

Chapter End Notes

Technoblade (bad at keeping secrets): We are renovating a room for you in our house. This is happening. Right now.

Tommy (oblivious): ...You are committing atrocities? You are doing crime?

(Also, don't think about Tommy in Wilbur's sweater with Techno's crown, face stained with blue and sitting in Techno's lap as he teaches him how to play video games.)

I told you not to think about it, but you all couldn't help yourselves.

[One.](#)

[Two.](#)

[Three.](#)

[Four.](#)

[Five.](#)

(I... feel like there was another one, so if there was and I didn't link it, please send it again.)

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“No, no, no, give me that,” Wilbur said snatching the contents of Phil’s hands away unnecessarily violently. Phil glowered at him, but he didn’t seem to notice, too busy stuffing the socks Phil had been about to put away into the drawer to the left of the one Wilbur was putting them in.

“I think I can handle putting clothing into a dresser,” Phil said dryly. His son glanced at him, but then dismissed his words, going back to pulling different articles of clothing out of one of the many, many bags they’d carried into what used to be Phil’s office from Wilbur’s room. Phil sighed at him and sat back on the floor. He didn’t bother to pick anything else up to store away. Wilbur had not allowed him to do anything but breathe in the past 20 minutes. “The kids could probably handle putting clothing into a dresser too,” he mumbled.

“But it has to be *perfect*, Phil,” Wilbur stressed. It was not the first time he’d expressed the sentiment today.

“I doubt the organization of a sock drawer is going to impact any decisions going forward,” Phil argued. “In fact, they’ll probably just think it’s creepy that you know how they organize their clothes.”

Wilbur frowned at that. Probably because Phil was *right*. “Tommy likes Ghostbur. He’ll probably be fine with it.”

“And... the other one?”

“We’ll just let Tubbo think Tommy organized it.”

“Uh, huh,” Phil replied. “And what happens when he learns about that lie of omission?”

“Hmm,” Wilbur said. “I’ll make a note to not swallow any watermelon seeds in the foreseeable future.”

Phil winced at the implications of that statement, though Wilbur seemed more amused at Phil’s reaction that worried about the violent possibility. “You think he could manage to grow partially digested seeds?” Phil asked, morbidly curious.

“Exploding trees, Phil,” Wilbur made an explosion hand gesture. “What about exploding trees kicking hero ass all over the city did you not understand?”

Oh, Phil understood it perfectly despite not having seen it for himself. Even just from his one interaction with Tubbo in the lab, he’d been able to tell the boy was powerful even if his full potential was untapped. Well... perhaps it was getting a little tapped now by the sound of it. “He has quite the power.”

“You adopted a being that can reverse time to prevent his own and occasionally other’s deaths.”

“I can still be impressed by someone’s powers, Will,” Phil rolled his eyes. “Actually, his power’s not so different from Techno’s. They both deal in bringing about life.”

“And they can both be used to fucking destroy a city if you give them a reason,” Wilbur snorted.

“He’s a good kid, though. I mean, I haven’t actually spoken to him other than the car ride, but Ghostbur’s watched him a bit. He’s pretty friendly and loyal as long as people aren’t horrible to him. I think he’s one of those people who would be an optimist if life ever gave him a good card. Somehow, he’s more stubborn than Technoblade. He does not budge on some things. Honestly, I’m surprised he didn’t get fired for insubordination already, but his mentor was a bit laxer than some. He’s a bit overprotective of Tommy which, as we know is mutual. It’s a good thing most of the time. I don’t think they’d have been able to push through without each other.” He frowned. “Neither of them deserves the life they’ve been living. I wish...” he trailed off.

“You wish what?” Phil prompted when he didn’t seem inclined to finish his thought.

“Wilbur sighed. “Ghostbur’s a fucking idiot.”

Phil raised an eyebrow at him. “Wilbur...”

“He is!” Wilbur insisted. “He’s known what the Guild’s been up to for months and he didn’t... I didn’t...”

Oh. Phil sucked in a breath. “That’s not something you can blame yourself for. It’s not your fault.”

“Then whose fault is it then?”

“A lot of people’s,” Phil answered, “but not yours.” Wilbur looked away, hands holding a sweatshirt (that was surely too large for either of the children it was possibly intended for) but not moving to put it away. “Things are different when you’re asleep, Will. You know that.”

“Are they?” Wilbur asked skeptically.

“Would you have flooded my bathroom to make a ‘mansion’ for a fish you found only to realize you couldn’t get the fish through the door you sealed up with towels and plastic wrap because it was entirely corporal, so then you logically opened the door and flooded the hallway, while you were awake?”

There was a struggle on Wilbur’s face as he tried desperately not to allow Phil to lighten the mood. “It...” he said, “exam weeks are stressful.”

“The point is,” Phil said. “People’s sleeping minds are weird. We just usually keep those things to ourselves. Ghostbur’s different. A little more aware, but he still processes things differently. You can’t hate yourself for not reacting how you would have if you’d been fully conscious of it.”

There was a pause. “He’s still a passive idiot,” Wilbur grumbled.

Phil surveyed the mostly put together new bedroom. “He certainly managed to buy a lot of things for a ‘passive idiot,’ he commented.

“It’s all extremely necessary, I assure you.”

“Even the customizable Lego night light?”

“Especially the Lego night light, Phil. Are you really so very, very old that you can’t recognize its awesomeness?”

Phil narrowed his eyes and leaned over to bump their shoulders. His son, however, did not take this as the intended admonishment; instead, he took it as permission to lean over himself and settle his entire body weight onto Phil's shoulder. Phil rolled his eyes at him but brought the wing on that side down to curl around him.

"Plus," Wilbur continued, "it'll be enough of a novelty that Tommy will forget to complain about us getting him a nightlight 'like a baby.' He'll probably make it look like a dick but at least he'll be able to sleep in peace."

Phil frowned and felt compelled to lean slightly to the side to kiss his son's forehead. "He's afraid of the dark?" Phil asked, unreasonable heartbroken at the knowledge.

"Well, he's never said it out loud in front of Ghostbur, but I don't think Tubbo 'accidently' leaves the bathroom light on for himself at night."

"He works the night shift," Phil said in distaste. "We've chased a kid that's afraid of the dark through alleyways at night."

"Yeah, well, we can put it on the list of grievances with the Superhero Guild," Wilbur said. "He also doesn't like loud noises and small spaces, which is why this room was a better choice than the 'library': no closet."

"You thought of everything, didn't you?" Phil asked.

Wilbur pushed himself closer and Phil allowed it, setting his head down on top of Will's. "I really want little brothers," he said.

"Wilbur," Phil warned. "What have we said about pushing labels onto people?"

"I don't know," Will said, a smirk in his voice. "I stop listening anytime you start talking about it."

"Little shit," Phil said mildly.

"It worked with Techno."

"No," Phil replied. "It really didn't."

"Did so."

"It worked out with Techno *despite* your antics and that's only because he'd know me for years and was under the impression you were a normal 8-year-old who couldn't know he was in his 20s."

"And now I have a baby brother."

Phil just shook his head. In truth, he knew it was useless. The two of them were an unstoppable force and an unmovable object. Wilbur had decided Techno was his little brother years before Techno even knew Wilbur's name, let alone before they met in the flesh. Meanwhile, Techno refused any labels that infantilized him more than he'd already been given the circumstances and being claimed as a 'baby brother' by someone who looked and acted like an 8-year-old (even if he only kind of ended up being so) annoyed him to no end. Besides, firm relationship labels just made him uncomfortable in general.

Neither of them would ever give in to the other, that much was clear. (Phil would never say it out loud as he respected Techno's boundaries far too much to undermine him in that way, but the ensuing

conflict that would come when the word brother was thrown around always did remind Phil of bickering siblings.) Still...

"Be a little less pushy this time, please," Phil pleaded. "Techno was always going to stay."

Wilbur leaned his head into Phil's shoulder a bit harder. "I know."

"I know you, Wilbur. I know you have your heart set on a certain result, but you can't force something like that. It's not fair. We won't leave them to The Guild no matter what, but we can't force them to stay."

"I know," Wilbur said. "I want to, but I won't."

Phil rubbed his shoulder soothingly. This was why they'd already decided Phil would be the one talking to him once the room was done. Wilbur had always had trouble with the 'if you love it let it go,' lesson, and they all knew he wouldn't come into the conversation with the right attitude.

"Let's just finish getting the bedroom ready," Wilbur said after a moment. He pulled away, shoving the wing away from him a bit rougher than necessary. Phil smacked him lightly with it in reprimand before pulling it away fully. It had the desired effect as a smile tugged on the edges of Wilbur's mouth at that. He grabbed a stack of shirts out of a bag near them and handed them to Phil. Phil nodded and took the shirts, preparing to put them in one of the open drawers. "No, not there!" Wilbur exclaimed and Phil groaned.

"Do you just want to do it all yourself?" he asked. "Is that what this is?"

"No offence, father mine, but you're a shit interior designer." Phil reached over and ruffled his hair as much as he could before Wilbur squeaked and shoved him away. "Why the hair?!"

Phil just pushed himself to his feet. "Text me if you need heavy things moved. I'm going to go check on Tech and Tommy."

Wilbur shot him a thumbs up and Phil turned to leave the room. He winced as his back cracked a bit. He'd been sitting on the floor and leaning in awkward positions for too long and while the jokes thrown around the household about him being old were greatly exaggerated, he was not blessed with a 20-year-old's spine. Though, he did not have too much to complain about. He knew that his back could be a lot worse by this age if he, say, slept in an old train car for half a decade with what barely passed for a mattress.

He passed by the kitchen on his way downstairs and noted that it was about time someone started to cook dinner, and by someone, he of course meant either Techno or himself. They were trying to *not* scare off Tommy.

He made it to the cell door and pushed in the code to open it. He had to take a moment to absorb the sight in front of him once the door opened mostly because it was a bit of a shock. Somehow, Tommy had managed to end up sitting in Techno's lap. He had the golden crown that belonged to the man's alter ego tilted slightly to the side on his head since it was too large for him. Phil's first thought upon seeing this, admittedly, was him wondering if his friend had somehow been replaced by a clone at some point without Phil realizing it.

His second thought was that the tilted crown, the blue stains, the far too big sweater, and the fact that Tommy was sitting on Technoblade's lap to play a video game was an adorable sight to behold.

However, then there was his third thought. Which was, ‘Oh god, Techno’s introduced him to video games. Oh god, please don’t be like Technoblade when it comes to video games.’ Yet, his prayers probably weren’t going to be answered considering neither of the normally rather jumpy individuals even glanced his way when he entered the room, too engrossed in their game to care. Why, oh why had Phil ever introduced Technoblade to video games? He’d been an oblivious fool who’d wanted to give him something to do, and Techno had responded to the moving things and flashing lights in ways he didn’t respond to anything else. Yet, later, Phil would learn that this was not a good thing. How could he have known that the boy whose only interest at the time seemed to be staring at walls was deep down incredibly competitive and a completionist at heart? The world had never been the same as soon as Phil gave him a bright colored flashy scoreboard and he learned he could *win*.

“Hello?” Phil tried after a full minute of being ignored.

Tommy glanced over at the sound of his voice, but Techno just grunted a “busy.” At Techno’s dismissal, Tommy returned his attention to the screen where he was scrolling through a list of attacks in the battle he was in, seeming to debate which option was best.

“It’s almost dinner time.”

“M’kay. Either will work fine right now, Tommy.” Tommy nodded and pressed a button. An anthropomorphic frog’s tongue shot out at one of the on-screen enemies.

“You should probably cook something.”

“Mhmm.”

“I’m cooking just steamed cauliflower for dinner if you leave me to my own devices.”

“Sure.”

“The house is on fire.”

“No. It’s not.”

“Technoblade, please. We have things to do. You can’t do this again.”

Techno tilted his head, finally looking at him. “We’re in the middle of the game.”

“It’s a 20-hour game.”

“Actually,” Techno said with a smirk. His arms snacked loosely around Tommy’s waist: a clear message that said, *‘You aren’t going to make me abandon the poor sad child who just wants to play video games to cook dinner, are you?’* “He’s still learning the controls, so it’ll probably be more like 30-35...”

“I’m not that bad,” Tommy said, reaching over idly to smack Techno’s knee without even seeming to think about it. He was too focused on the screen as one of his enemies fell.

“You haven’t made it to the rat chase yet,” Techno replied blandly, ignoring the light physical assault.

“I can catch a rat! I’ve caught so many rats before. You just watch me Technoblade! I will get that rat so fucking fast!”

“You also can usually walk without bumping into walls in real life,” Techno pointed out. “And yet...”

“Fuck you! Fuck you! Fuck you! That corner was impossible to get out of.”

“I was able to get out of it just fine when you gave up.”

“You cheated!”

“And how exactly did I do that?”

“I don’t know! There’s probably a secret button you didn’t tell me about! Like what’s this one?”

Techno slapped his hand away when it went to press a button.

“That turns it off, which I’m pretty sure you don’t want to do unless you want to lose an entire hour of progress.”

“Likely story,” he hissed, and then, quite suddenly, Phil was being legitimately perceived for the first time since entering the room, because the boy turned his bright blue eyes on him with what was probably meant to be a hurt and mournful expression, but the bright spark of mischief in them gave him away. “Phil, he’s cheating!”

And, really, there was only one logical response given the situation. “Oh Technoblade, how could you?”

Technoblade huffed and rolled his eyes with an expression that said ‘*Really?*’ but was also slightly bemused.

Tommy gave a delighted gasp when Phil played along. “Technoblade’s in trouble!” he crooned.

“He has no authority over me,” Techno said.

“Isn’t he, like, your dad.”

“I fucking hate Wilbur,” Techno deadpanned. “No, Phil isn’t my dad. I already said.”

“Well,” Tommy replied, contemplatively. “He’s still your supervillain boss, or whatever. You still have to do whatever he says.”

“That’s not exactly how the three of us operate, kid,” and Phil was sure that Techno had no idea the depth of the conversation he’d clearly just invited by the look on Tommy’s face as he processed that.

Tommy’s brow pinched in confusion immediately, which did make sense considering the very strict hierarchy the Guild operated under. Even among two heroes of the same rank and job description, there was always some factor that gave one of them a higher position over the other be that time on the field, the rank of the person who’d train them, or a thousand other little things that separated people from each other. There were never equals in the field and that was by design. When fighting, everyone was expected to know the chain of command and follow those higher in the hierarchy unquestioningly. The practice had made sense once upon a time to Phil, and maybe it still did for an organization the size of the Guild.

Phil was pretty sure neither Techno nor Wilbur would have lasted a day working at the Guild. The number of times they’d said something to the effect of ‘Shut up old man,’ and fucked off to do whatever they liked was uncountable.

“But Philza’s the boss,” Tommy said with a frown. “Everyone knows that.”

“Everyone does not know that,” Phil said. “They assume that because I’m the only one with interpersonal skills and by extension the only one who ever talks to the public.”

“If Phil was the boss, we’d all be in prison,” Techno said. “The number of times I had to drag that bird brain away from a fight he had no business getting into...”

“Hey...”

“So, you’re the boss then?” Tommy asked Techno.

Techno’s lips twitched in discomfort. “No, I’m not the boss.”

Tommy frowned. “Then Wilbur’s the boss?”

“Kid, I really don’t think you’re understanding what I’m saying,” Techno said, his tone as steady as ever. He glanced at Phil with a pinch between his eyebrows that said, *‘I’m getting out of my depth. Help.’* Phil just tilted his head just barely making Techno’s mouth pinch in a *‘No, I’m not fine. Stop laughing,’* expression.

“...Is there a fourth person I don’t know about then?” Tommy asked.

“No,” Techno said. “There just is no boss.”

“But how does that work, then?” Tommy asked.

“We just work together.”

“Well, what if you don’t agree on a plan? Who decides?”

It was a good thing Tommy was in a position where he couldn’t easily look at Techno’s face because Techno’s eyes were boring into Phil with desperate resentment at being forced to have this conversation. Phil normally only got that expression when he asked the man to fold the socks. “We talk, I guess, until we agree. We’re normally on the same page or it’s just a little thing.”

Tommy was clearly skeptical of this. “What if something goes wrong with a plan? Who takes control?”

“I... again, we just talk. We have different strengths so sometimes someone takes charge based on that. Like, if it has to do with talking to people, Phil leads, but I’ll take charge if we need to fight someone and Wilbur’s better at figuring out how to get out of shit.”

“What if one of you messes up?”

“...Talking again.”

“That doesn’t make any sense.”

“What do you mean?”

“Like, do all three of you talk or just the two that didn’t make the mistake?” he asked, “Because if I was part of the decision when I messed up, I’d just decide not to get punished for things, and that wouldn’t work. Or, I guess maybe if we had to compromise, it’d be something easy like extra paperwork or having to work a bit extra, but I don’t think that’d help me learn my lesson.”

Phil could tell that Techno caught the implications behind that statement as well. There was silence in the room for a moment and as much as Techno's eyes had been saying he didn't know what to say for the entire conversation that came before, it hadn't actually been true until now.

Phil moved over to kneel down in front of them both. Tommy watched him come down to his level with curious eyes and Phil smiled back.

"We don't do that sort of thing to each other," Phil told him. "Even before... even when Will was younger, it was always a conversation, not something to hurt."

"But how do you learn not to make mistakes by just talking?"

"Well," Phil said. "I think we all know when we do something wrong once it's pointed out to us and why we should correct and make up for that thing. If it's a mistake, it's not something we meant to do or wanted to do. Or, even if we did, we didn't want whatever consequences came from it. We can just talk it through with each other and figure out the best way to make sure something like it doesn't happen again. No punishing necessary."

Tommy seemed to roll this over in his head for a moment. "Well, I'm stupid," he said casually, and Phil physically flinched. "That wouldn't work on me."

"That isn't true," Phil replied.

"I can't even learn with punishments," Tommy scoffed, his tone still worryingly blasé.

"Then maybe the punishments are the problem," Phil said darkly. Tommy just squinted at him.

"Uh," Technoblade said after a moment. "You said I should cook dinner."

It had actually been a joke, but Phil could tell Techno needed an escape from the uncomfortable situation. "If you wouldn't mind," he said.

"Yeah, I got it," Techno said. He reached forward to take the controller from Tommy's hand. "Let's save your game so we can finish up later."

"Tommy can keep playing while you're gone, I don't mind," Phil said.

He noticed Tommy twitch.

"Nah, I need to make sure he has the correct opinions about it," Techno said, but he was clearly leaving something out. Phil didn't push.

Tommy nodded seriously. "The frog man is the best character because he has a big sword and does something later."

"Good," Techno praised, pressing a hand briefly to the top of his head. The crown was jostled out of place and just about blinded Tommy. He evaded the hands trying to smack him away and shoved himself to his feet. "I'll be back with dinner."

Phil turned back to Tommy once Techno had gone, shifting to sit instead of kneel next to him. His back protested just a bit. "What are you doing on the floor?" Phil wondered out loud. He could easily have played the game from the bed. In fact, the television was set up where it would be easier to see from the bed.

“The bed is evil. I’ve decided.”

“I see,” Phil said with a chuckle. “You got bored?”

“Yeah,” he said. His hands were wandering as he spoke now that he didn’t have a video game to keep them occupied. He started to fiddle with the blankets around him.

“Not used to standing still much, huh?” he asked. It was an obvious fact even if Phil had never seen him in his normal day to day life. His fighting style was constant movement relying on being faster and more flexible than his opponent. It was not a stretch to assume he was much the same when not fighting.

“No,” Tommy groaned. His hand found the stuffed cow Wilbur had given him and that seemed to snag his interest a little bit. He pulled it into his lap and began fiddling with its ears. “It sucks.”

Phil felt a moment of guilt for keeping him all cooped up the last few days, but then quickly remembered that Tommy had a hole in his stomach so he wouldn’t have been bouncing around anywhere anyway. “I know it sucks,” he said, “but you do need some time to heal.”

“Ugh,” he replied. “Usually I’m fixed by now.”

“Well, you do have a stab wound,” Phil pointed out.

“It should still feel better by now. I’m a quick healer.”

“Do you have super healing?” Phil asked.

“Nope,” Tommy said. “I’m just a manly man!”

“Are you sure?” Phil asked, hands already twitching with the urge to take off the power suppressants if that were the case, consequences of moving too quickly be damned.

“Yep. I think it’s Wilbur’s fault,” he said.

Phil raised an eyebrow, “and why is that?”

“He’s all fussy about it and I think that makes my body think it’s okay to be a little bitch about things it’d usually let me shrug off.”

Phil frowned at him. “That’s a concerning mindset,” he said.

“You’re a concerning mindset,” he shot back.

Phil chose to ignore... whatever type of insult that was. “Do you need pain meds?”

“What are you all, drug dealers?” he groaned. Phil scrutinized him. “Wilbur made me take some before he went upstairs.”

“And are you lying?”

He scrunched his nose up at Phil. “Not this time.”

Phil was going to text Wilbur just in case, but for now he said. “Fine.”

Tommy had learned that he could push the stuffed cow's nose in a bit only for it to slowly pop back out and he was mindlessly doing the action over and over with one hand while the other fiddled with the small tuft of hair on the edge of its tail. Maybe he should get the kid a fidget cube... assuming Wilbur wasn't already way ahead of him. Wilbur was probably way ahead of him.

"What's its name?" Phil asked after a moment.

Tommy blinked up at him and then looked at the cow in his hands. His fidgeted pausing. "Oh," he said. "He doesn't have one."

"Well, he has to have a name," Phil said with an encouraging smile, but Tommy didn't respond to the urging as he might have hoped.

He grimaced and squeezed the cow in his hands, shaking his head.

"Why not?" Phil asked confused.

"Naming things always ends badly. It's worse when they go away."

Phil felt his heart squeeze. There was something deep and rotted in that statement that Phil doubted he could even come close to touching let alone uprooting after only a few days. Yet, he also couldn't just let it be. He let his hand reach forward to rest on his cheek, pulling the boy's gaze to him. Tommy seemed to hesitate for a moment, eyes blown a bit wide as he stared at Phil's face, but then he pressed back into the touch. Phil smiled at him gently. "He won't be going away," he said.

"You can't promise that," Tommy said with a frown. Perhaps that was true.

"Well," Phil replied. "I can promise that Ghostbur would murder anyone who tried to take him from you after he gave him to you."

Skepticism chiseled lines onto his face. "Ghostbur couldn't murder anyone," he stated, and he was right... about the version of Ghostbur he'd met.

"I... wouldn't be too sure about that," Phil said and almost laughed when Tommy rolled his eyes. "He gets rather overprotective of certain people." Phil's thumb brushed over the blue fingerprint over Tommy's eyebrow. There were two reasons this color might end up on a person's skin. The reason for this stain was soft and adorable and it was also a promise of blue stained corpses if anyone laid a finger on the kid.

"He's a dork," Tommy huffed.

"That is also true," Phil said with a grin. Tommy grinned back at him seeming delighted that Phil was willing to pick on his own son with him. "Come on," Phil encouraged. "He deserves a name."

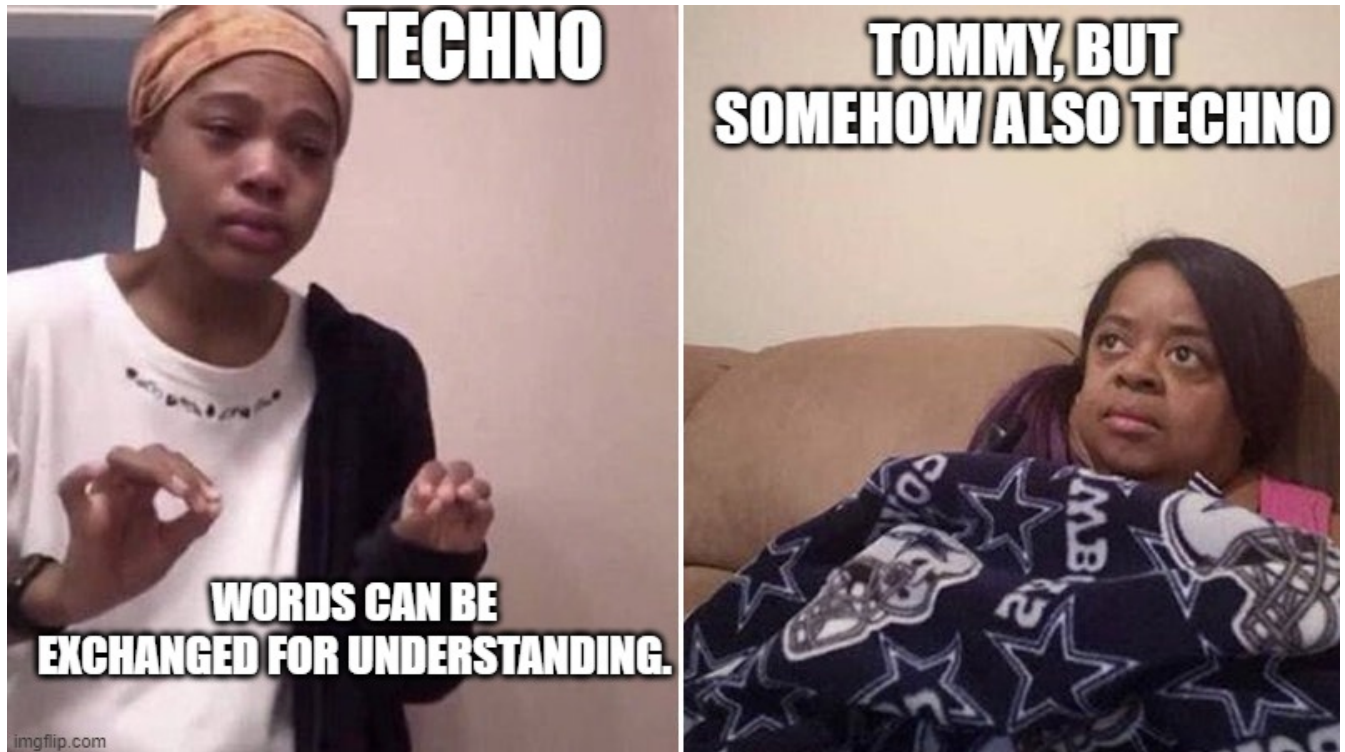
Tommy still hesitated, emotions flashing through his eyes too quick for Phil to catch. "Henry," he finally said, and it came so effortlessly that Phil had to wonder if he'd secretly named it already but hadn't wanted to admit it out loud. He wondered why if that were the case, though he was sure he wouldn't like the answer.

"That's a great name," Phil said, knowing he would have said that about any name that came out of his mouth.

Tommy looked at him, and he couldn't help but feel like he was being tested for something. "Thanks," he said.

Phil reached up to move Techno’s crown into a better position since it was at risk of falling off still from Techno messing with it and Tommy readjusting it. “Of course,” he said. “Now, would you like to play a different game or watch a movie until dinner?”

Chapter End Notes



[from Imgflip Meme Generator](#)

Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy might have to reconsider the whole ‘the bed is evil’ thing. While sleeping on the floor wasn’t the worst thing that could have happened to him while captured by supervillains, he found that it wasn’t actually that much fun. This was probably due to the fact that it was a linoleum floor and he’d not put a lot of blankets on the bottom of his nest.

He’d had a bit of a restless night. His face was probably completely blue by this point since he had vague memories of Ghostbur reaching out to sooth him back to sleep every time he stirred.

Ghostbur was already gone by the time Tommy woke up, woke up. Instead, Technoblade was with him, sitting on one of the chairs in sight of Tommy’s blanket pile and reading a book like a nerd.

“You’re a nerd,” Tommy greeted with a yawn.

His eyes flickered up to Tommy and he put the book aside. “Hello, Tommy,” he said, and Tommy paused in rubbing his eyes because something was just barely off about his tone. He was also looking at Tommy a bit weird.

“The hell is wrong with you?” Tommy asked.

He blinked at Tommy, clasping his hands together as he frowned. “What do you mean?”

Tommy squinted at him. “You’re acting funny.”

Tommy’s eyes narrowed in on the way the skin around Techno’s eyes crinkled briefly and his nose twitched once. “I literally just said hello,” he said.

“Yeah, but you did it funny.”

“Did not.”

“Did so.”

They stared at each other for a couple of seconds. Technoblade’s thumb rubbed a circle into the back of his own hand. “Phil’s cooking you breakfast,” he changed the subject.

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him, doing his best to see behind that statement to whatever was going on in his head. There was clearly something going on in his head, not that Tommy didn’t expect him to be up to things sometimes. He was literally a supervillain. It just seemed... narrowed in on Tommy and Tommy wasn’t a big fan of that. “Okay,” Tommy said after a moment.

“Okay.”

And... that was clearly all that Technoblade planned to say unprompted this morning. He did the same thumb rubbing thing to the back of his hand. It was a barely noticeable movement, and he didn’t look like he was even aware he was doing it. That probably meant it was genuine. It was probably nervousness or anticipation. Tommy doubted it was anger. The movement was too smooth for that. Though he couldn’t know for certain. Different people had different tells.

“Should I be nervous, man?” he finally asked after a few more moments of silence.

“About what?” he asked doing the nose twitch again.

“I don’t know,” Tommy puffed out, taking that as a ‘yes.’ “What’s going on?”

There was a pause and his shoulder twitched up just a bit. “I have been instructed not to tell you.”

Oh, well, Tommy did not like *that*. He did not like that one bit. “What the fuck does that mean?” he asked.

“I’m not telling you, Tommy. You’ll figure it out soon,” he said. His voice left room for no arguments and Tommy just stared up at him. He stared back and there wasn’t anything particularly cruel or violent in his eyes, but Tommy still didn’t like it.

Okay, so, shit was about the hit the fan then. Great. What the fuck should Tommy do about that?

He really, really hoped it was just something like they’d managed to make a deal with the Guild and they were about to ship Tommy home, but why the hell would Technoblade not be allowed to tell him that?

Technoblade eventually looked away and Tommy’s own eyes dropped to the blankets on his lap.

Obviously, something worse was about to happen and his mind was easily able to make a few guesses. He found himself gnawing at his bottom lip and picking at the blankets surrounding him. His fingers brushed the stuffed cow that Phil had convinced him to name the night before and he felt a bit ill.

Bad things happened when he named things. Bad things happened when he showed he was attached to things. Now bad things were going to happen. Why did he let Phil convince him to name the stupid cow?

Maybe that had been the point, actually. They’d been really, really nice and gentle with him so far, but sometimes Dream would be nice for a bit to lull Tommy into a false sense of security before a punishment. He was never quite as nice as they had been and never for so long but maybe it was a balancing act. More kindness meant more pain. Maybe lulling him so much into security that he was willing to do something as dumb as name a stupid stuffed animal was the tipping point.

Phil opened the door with a tray full of breakfast after a few long minutes of awkward silence. He gave him a gentle smile and a soft, “Good morning,” but Technoblade practically bolted from the room the second he entered. Tommy eyed Phil with distrust. He was acting mostly normal, but if Technoblade had fled the room to get away from him, there was obviously something Tommy was missing.

He still took the plate of food though, because he was hungry and they did always give out good food. It was toast and some egg thing that looked like a muffin. He found the egg muffin thing had meat and cheese in it, and it was pretty good. Plus, Phil had been sensible enough to toast him normalish bread instead of weird lumpy bread, so that was nice.

He managed to relax a bit during breakfast because Phil really wasn’t acting too weird, but his hope that whatever was up was just with Technoblade went out of the window as soon as Tommy was finished with his plate.

“Would you like to leave this room for a bit?” Phil asked, and Tommy’s anxieties came back full force.

“Why?” he asked, warily.

Phil gave him a steadily warm smile. “I just thought you might want to go on a short walk,” was the answer. That was suspicious on its own before Phil added on, “and there’s something I want to show you.”

“Uh,” Tommy said, mind racing. “Okay.” Phil gave him an expectant look. Oh, this was happening now, he guessed. He took a steadying breath and worked on detangling himself from the mess of blankets he was in. His injury protested as he stood. Honestly, when would the stupid stab wound shut the fuck up? He’d had enough of this.

Phil leaned down once he’d struggled to his feet and swept up the pile to dump it on the bed. That action gave Tommy pause. That was something someone would do when they were expecting to take all of the blankets and bedding out of the room soon. His stomach clenched in anxiety, and it only got worse when Phil picked up Henry from the pile and handed him to Tommy.

“You should bring him,” Phil said, and Tommy swallowed a lump in his throat as he took the cow. Why the fuck would Phil want him to take a stuffed cow on a walk? He clenched his hand around the stuffed animal anyway as Phil moved to unlock the door.

Tommy had never seen the inside of their base, he realized. He’d been blindfolded for the walk here. All he’d seen was the dressing room and the inside of his cell. It was clearly a huge place even from just remembering the walk and seeing how far the hallways stretched now. It didn’t really have supervillain lair vibes. It kind of edged on hospital vibes, maybe evil scientist lab if the evil scientists were a bit lax. Of course, his cell had looked kind of evil scientisty before the pillows and blankets, the television, the PlayStation, and the blue stains Ghostbur left everywhere. The long plain hallway was pretty creepy, and Tommy had never really liked hospitals after that one time he’d gotten really sick. The unnerving echo of their footsteps did nothing for his growing anxiety.

“Are you alright?” Phil asked him with a frown on his face.

“Yeah,” Tommy said and grimaced when it came out a bit too defensively. “Why?”

“You’re shaking a bit there, Mate,” he said, brow pinched. He was, Tommy realized. They came to a stop, and Phil reached out to touch the side of his face. It was strange. He was terrified of whatever was going on with Phil, but he still couldn’t help but lean into the touch. “Still not feeling well?” he asked. Tommy shrugged. Phil looked him over for a few seconds. “Here,” he said. He bent down and Tommy’s feet were suddenly not on the ground anymore.

Most days he’d be a bit miffed at being carried like a baby, but he didn’t protest today. On the contrary, he turned to hide his face in his chest.

“There,” Phil said. “I’ve got you.”

Tommy clenched a hand in the fabric of his shirt, doing his best to soak in as much of the warmth as possible in case things were about to go cold.

After a few more minutes of walking, Tommy felt Phil’s gait change as they traveled up some stairs, but he kept his face hidden in Phil’s chest.

“Are you doing okay?” Phil asked as Tommy heard a beep and then a door open and close. Phil had to shift all of Tommy’s weight to one arm in order to open the door, but he felt no less secure in his grip.

“Fine,” Tommy answered.

Phil hummed lightly and began to walk again. He stopped to open another door, but this one didn’t beep to indicate it was unlocked with a code. It also didn’t close behind them. Tommy was shifted around again and then set down on something soft. He peaked open his eyes cautiously just to see a bedroom. He’d been set down on a bed in a pretty normal looking bedroom if a bit fancier than what he was used to for himself.

“Uh,” Tommy said after a moment of hesitation. He had no idea what the hell was going on. “What’s this?”

“It’s a bedroom,” Phil said, and Tommy shot him a look. Prick.

“Yeah,” he said, “but why... Is this what you wanted to show me?”

“It is,” Phil confirmed. Well, that was confusing, but also a relief. He moved to sit down next to Tommy on the mattress giving Tommy a good view of the door that opened into a hallway. He couldn’t see much of it, but unlike the plain hallways downstairs, the walls had an... interesting wallpaper pattern with a lot of birds on it. Tommy’s attention was drawn back to Phil when the man tucked one of his legs up under him, so his torso tilted towards Tommy a bit. He smiled, warm and gentle. Phil was good at that, at looking open and calm, but Tommy could read a bit of tension in his seemingly lax posture.

“Why?” Tommy asked.

Phil looked at him for a few seconds. “I have an offer to make you.” Tommy tilted his head at him. “Do me a favor and listen to it?”

“As opposed to jumping through a window and fleeing the premises?” Tommy asked.

“Well,” Phil said with an amused smile, “I wouldn’t necessarily put it past you considering how agile you could be during fights.” He held out a hand between them to Tommy’s confusion. Not sure what else he would want by doing that, Tommy offered up the hand not busy holding a stuffed animal. Phil took his wrist gently and then the power suppression cuff snapped off.

Tommy sucked in a surprised breath. It wasn’t the first time in his life he’d suddenly felt the gateway to his powers swing open. The first time he hadn’t known what the feeling meant, but he did now. He already felt lighter even though he wasn’t actively using them.

“What?” Tommy asked.

“Like I said, I have an offer for you,” Phil said, “and you’re free to refuse it.”

“An... offer?” he asked. He was having trouble processing the fact that Phil had just handed him back his powers without warning or reason.

“You should leave The Superhero Guild,” Phil said bluntly, and Tommy blinked at him, startled. “I’m offering you a place here with us. One for your friend, Tubbo, as well. Ghostbur watched you long enough to know you’re a package deal and I don’t know him well, but he was intriguing when I met him.” Phil tilted his head to look at the rest of the room they were in, and Tommy followed his gaze. “This room doesn’t belong to any of us. Actually, Ghostbur bought pretty much everything in this

room specifically for the two of you behind Wilbur's back. You could stay here. We'd feed you and give you whatever you need. Or if you don't want to actually live in our house, we could figure out a different place for you two to stay."

"You want me to come work for you?" Tommy asked.

Phil's face pinched just a bit. "Not exactly, no," he replied.

"Then what?"

"It'd be more like..." he hesitated, mulling over his next words carefully. "Like you'd be my ward."

"Like an apprenticeship?"

Phil sighed a bit. "Not quite. We wouldn't want you to be working or fighting for us. In fact, I'd insist you didn't, not for a couple of years, at least."

Tommy's face screwed up. "Then what's the point?" he asked.

"The point is," Phil said. "The Guild shouldn't have been letting you work as a hero in the first place. You're very good, but you shouldn't be fighting yet. You shouldn't have been put in that position."

"I mean," Tommy said. "I... it's not bad."

"It is," Phil said.

"Yeah, well," Tommy said, trying to get annoyed, but feeling a bit too off kilter for it. "Well, you're not exactly the pillar of morality."

"I was a hero once," Phil reminded. "Being a hero doesn't mean you're right. I learned that a couple of times. You have to make decisions based on if they are good or bad, not who sanctions them. I know it's hard to see, but you have to know that the situation The Guild put you in is not good."

That.

That was maybe true if he thought about it. If he thought about his last time he was at The Superhero Guild HQ and being shoved into a cell, it seemed true. If he thought about just how mad Dream would be when he came crawling back to him, it seemed true.

"But I have to go back," Tommy said.

"Why?" Phil asked him, and that question dug its claws into Tommy's mind. Why? He could feel the pull to return like a choke collar on a dog being tugged on. It was the same feeling he felt every time things got a bit too hard, or Dream pissed him off a bit too much. Sometimes he'd want to take Tubbo's hand and bolt like they always had when things had gone south before Dream. His hand squeezed the soft plushie in his lap, and he wondered for the first time in quite a while why he hadn't ever done that. Why had he gotten tangled up in hero stuff in the first place? He knows he'd never pursued being a hero. He knows Dream was the one to approach him. He knows...

Actually, he couldn't even remember the reason he'd accepted the offer.

He does know that this offer feels a lot gentler. There's an open door and no cuff around his wrist. What he'd get out of accepting would be as good if not better than what he had as a hero unless there were some hidden clauses he didn't know of yet. He and Tubbo would have food and a place to stay.

They'd probably have an abundance of medical care considering just how overboard Wilbur went over a single stab wound.

They'd have to make sure there weren't any cameras in the room like in the Guild housing he and Tubbo had dodged, but really those had been the only reason they hadn't stayed there. This room was a lot better than those and came with well-cooked food.

He was sure they'd get some sort of training with their powers. Technoblade would probably teach him how to sword fight better if he pestered him enough. They wouldn't even have to fight for a bit it sounded like. Phil said he shouldn't fight for a few years, probably to make sure he was trained well enough (something The Guild put to the side a lot).

He'd probably also get to see more of Tubbo. Maybe they'd even train them together.

Tommy's mind had raced through these thoughts in a moment. Phil was still speaking. "Have they done anything to deserve your loyalty?" he asked.

Not really, Tommy thought, but then again, had the SBI? They had been kind to him when they didn't have to be, sure, but was that enough for loyalty? This room was nice. The food was better than he'd ever had. Was that enough? They were still supervillains. Did he have a moral obligation to refuse? Phil had said that being a hero didn't mean being good. Was the opposite true as well? They were trying to break people out of The Pit. The heroes had never even given The Pit a second thought.

Was this offer even real? Or was it all a trick?

"Can I think about it?" he finally asked.

"Of course," Phil answered. He patted Tommy's knee briefly and then stood. "Why don't I let you check out the room on your own for a bit and you can think? I'll be in the kitchen if you want to talk. You go straight out this door and turn left."

Tommy nodded and Phil left the room, closing the door behind him.

He waited for a few moments after the man left and then turned to eye the room more intensely. The bedding was not white like the set he'd had in the cell. It was mostly black actually with a pattern made up of bunches of cherries on vines. He peeled back the comforter to find the sheets and pillowcases had the same pattern, but the background was a cream color.

He flipped the comforter back up and stood to look over the rest of the room. There were posters on the walls some of which he recognized the content of and some of which he didn't. There was a bookshelf with a few books and a dresser with a giant mirror on it. He sighed at his own reflection. There were so many blue handprints all over his face and there was blue in his hair. It wasn't like he was surprised. He'd assumed he was bluer the second he woke up, but *this* was a bit excessive.

He turned away after a few moments. The wardrobe in the corner actually looked pretty wicked like it should be in some old mansion somewhere filled with moth eaten clothing from centuries ago, but when he opened it, he just found normal shirts in two different sizes.

He considered the clothing for a long moment, but apparently they'd gotten this stuff for him and Tubbo and he was allegedly not a prisoner anymore... He snagged a red and white t-shirt from the wardrobe and then found a pair of jeans in the dresser. There was also a stack of tennis shoes by the door. Three were in Tommy's size, though he wondered why on Earth people would need more than one pair of tennis shoes. Fucking, rich people. It hurt to bend over and put them on, but Tommy

ignored that. He flopped back onto the bed to take a breather. It felt nice to be in real clothing, even if it wasn't clothing he was used to.

He'd taken off the sweater he'd liberated from Wilbur. He debated pulling it back on over the new t-shirt, but then decided to fold it instead. He set it near the head of the bed next to the pillows and then reached over and set Henry on top of that. It seemed like a nice place for him to sit.

Then, his eyes drifted to the window. It was huge and he could easily fit through it without even having to squeeze. He could see a forest with giant trees and a half-collapsed garden shed out of it. There were two pots on the sill filled with dirt, waiting for something to grow in them.

Was it real? He wondered. Or was it just an illusion. The suppression cuff was gone and there was a giant window. Phil wasn't even watching him. He hadn't even left the door open.

He got to his feet after looking out of the window for a few seconds and approached it. After a few moments of study, he figured out how it opened. It slid open with no problem. Alright then, he thought, let's test it. He hoisted himself up by the windowsill easily with the help of his powers and landed lightly on the other side.

Then he waited. No alarms went off, and no one came after him. After lingering near the window for a bit, he turned and took a few cautious steps towards the forest. Still, no one came after him and he ended up walking deeper into the forest. There were a few small paths that he was able to follow. He'd never been in a forest before. He'd never seen this many trees before.

He hopped up onto a low branch of one of the trees and sat to wait. Still, there were no alarms and no sounds of people angrily moving through the underbrush. No one came to drag Tommy back to the new bedroom or the cell or some far worse room.

After about half an hour of sitting in that tree, he decided he was cold and bored and jumped off the branch. Walking back to the house warmed him up a bit at least. He looked at the window still open from when he'd climbed out of it.

He had a lot to think about. His eyes traveled up.

It took a bit of a running start, but he was able to run and jump at a nearby tree high enough that he could kick off of it and get his hand on the edge of the house's roof. He pulled himself up easily and hopped to his feet.

To Tommy's surprise, there was already someone on the roof. He was on the opposite side and facing away from Tommy. Tommy hadn't made much noise when he landed, so the man didn't know anyone was there yet. Tommy dithered between calling to him and hopping back to the ground.

"Uh, hey?" he finally decided on.

Wilbur jumped a bit and Tommy bit back a laugh as he whipped around. He seemed more surprised to see Tommy than Tommy was to see him. "How did you get up here?" he asked.

Tommy hopped once and let himself float down slowly in answer.

Right," Wilbur said. "Chicken powers."

Tommy squawked, insulted. "They aren't *chicken* powers!"

Wilbur's eyes lit up. "Are too," he teased.

Tommy floundered for a moment, unable to deal with this flagrant disrespect. “Yeah, well, my ‘chicken powers’ kicked your ass on multiple occasions!”

He shot Tommy a half smile. “That they did,” he chuckled, but then his smile faded away. “Are you, uh, escaping?”

Tommy rolled his eyes. “If I was running, I wouldn’t have climbed onto your roof. I’d have just run. Could have too by the way. You have shit security.”

“We’re not running security right now,” he said. “You’re not a prisoner anymore.”

“Huh,” said Tommy. “Kind of weird.”

“What are you doing out here, then?” Wilbur asked.

“Well,” Tommy said. “I wanted to check, I guess.”

“Check?”

He shrugged. “Wanted to see if I jumped out of a window if alarms would go off and I’d be dragged back into a cell. Went and sat in a tree for a bit. Then came back and climbed onto the roof to think. I wasn’t really expecting someone else to be up here too.”

“Hmm, well, neither was I.”

They watched each other in silence for a moment.

“You can come sit by me if you’d like,” Wilbur invited, patting the space next to him. Tommy nodded and leapt over to the indicated spot because he could. Wilbur rolled his eyes as he plopped down.

This side of the house faced a small lake or a large pond. (Tommy wasn’t quite sure what the distinction was.) “That’s pog,” he said, pointing his foot at the body of water.

“Yeah. A little useless right now. Too cold to swim, but not frozen over yet.”

“Mmm,” Tommy replied.

“Wait,” Wilbur seemed to realize something. “You’re not wearing a jacket!”

“Oh,” Tommy said. “Yeah, no, I’m not.”

“How long did you say you’ve been outside? Come here.”

“I’m fine, Wilbur,” Tommy laughed, trying halfheartedly to wiggle away when Wilbur grabbed for him. He didn’t manage to escape it though, and he was pulled against Wilbur’s side, the man’s arm and slightly oversized long coat wrapping around his shoulder. The fabric was warm from his body heat. “I’ve been out in worse cold with less on.”

“I know you have,” Wilbur stressed. “Which is even more reason for me to worry.”

“You’re so stupid,” Tommy muttered, but the warmth was, admittedly, nice.

“Do not just go wandering off into the woods without a jacket if you do decide to leave. I will drive you back to the city myself if it comes to that, I swear, but you are not dying of hyperthermia in the woods.”

“No promises,” Tommy said and laughed at the glare he got in return, but then after a moment, he asked. “Would you really?”

He’d turned to watch Wilbur’s face when he asked. A line appeared at the corner of the eye he could see, and it was clear he didn’t like the idea, but for some reason, that just made Tommy believe it more when he said, “yes.”

“You know, you’re all powerful enough that you could have just made me give you whatever it is you want from me? I don’t think I could have gotten away with the cuff, especially since you live in the middle of fucking nowhere it looks like.”

“But that’s the thing Tommy, we really couldn’t have. That’s not how it works.”

And... Tommy’s arm was getting uncomfortable with the way Wilbur had squished it between their bodies. That is why he wiggled it around to freedom and stretched it out between Wilbur’s back and the back of the coat. For balance reasons, he put his opposite arm around Wilbur’s front so his fingertips almost touched. Wilbur squeezed him lightly with the arm around his shoulder and weight descended on the top of Tommy’s head.

“Your chin is boney,” Tommy complained into his shoulder.

“Do you have to ruin every moment?” he sighed.

“We aren’t having a moment. I’m a prisoner.”

“You are not.”

“Am so. You trapped me in your coat.”

“Fine,” Wilbur said. He unwrapped his arm from Tommy’s shoulder. “Go then. Shoo.”

“Can’t.”

“And why’s that?”

“Arms are stuck. Your fault entirely.”

“Uh huh.”

Tommy pressed a smile into Wilbur’s chest and the arm came back around him, tucking him into the coat once again. “What are *you* doing out here, by the way?” Tommy asked.

“I was sort of kicked out of the house this morning.”

“Why?”

“Techno and Phil were worried I’d scare you off before Phil could talk to you.”

Irony because Techno had just about scared him off before Phil could talk to him. “Why would they think that?”

“I sort of... ruined your face last night if you didn’t notice.”

“I did,” Tommy replied. “Prick.”

“Yeah, well, once I tried to superglue Techno to a chair to stop him from going on a school trip in Year 5, and they were worried about a repeat performance.”

Tommy laughed. “What?”

“They were taking him a whole 3 hours away!” Wilbur defended. “Anyway, they didn’t want me to pressure you into staying if you don’t want to.”

There was something oddly safe about that, that Wilbur wanted him to stay. He wanted him to stay in a way that compared him to Technoblade, and Tommy wasn’t quite sure what that type of staying was, but it did not feel dangerous. Especially not when he’d also offered to drive him back to the city despite his distaste for the idea. There was a weird sort of safety here leaning against him on the rooftop. It was something he’d never felt before even with Tubbo. He felt like he could relax. He could feel safe enough to sleep here even though life had trained him never to sleep out in the open. It was a bizarre thought.

“Okay,” Tommy said. Wilbur hummed and Tommy thought maybe he needed to clarify. “Okay, I’ll stay.”

“Oh,” Wilbur said softly. He squeezed Tommy even tighter.

“Tubbo’s going to take some convincing,” Tommy mused. “I don’t know if he’ll be as willing to leave the Guild.”

“I, uh,” Wilbur said. “I don’t think you have to worry about that one.”

“What, why?” Tommy asked.

“Tubbo quit The Guild when they wouldn’t immediately try to get you back from us,” Wilbur explained. “He declared war on the city.”

“*Tubbo?*” Tommy asked, confused.

“He’s been growing plants all over the city.”

Oh, he was just growing plants. That made sense. Illegal, but not too dangerous. “Well, that’ll help, I guess. I think he’ll trust me on it eventually anyway though.”

Wilbur nodded. “He’d follow you off a cliff.”

“That’d be pretty stupid of him. I float.”

Wilbur chuckled and pressed his cheek instead of his boney chin into Tommy’s hair this time. They sat like that for a few more minutes. “Anyway, it’s fucking cold, and I’m hungry. Can we go inside now?”

Wilbur laughed and pulled away. Tommy slid off the roof without a thought, but Wilbur had to climb. He seemed pretty practiced at it. His feet knew exactly where to go to catch footholds in the walls.

They were at the front of the house now. There were nice big windows that faced the lake and a porch with some chairs and a wooden swing. Wilbur led him up onto the porch and to the front door.

Technoblade was sitting on one of those comfy looking chairs in what must have been their living room. It was as big as his and Tubbo’s apartment. He barely restrained himself from bounding over to

the couch to see if it was as squishy as it looked.

Technoblade looked up from yet another book as they entered and shot Wilbur a look.

“He found me,” Wilbur defended himself.

“I hopped out of the window and went on a walk. Found this fucker on the roof when I came back.”

“I see,” Techno replied. He seemed a lot more normal than he had this morning to Tommy’s relief.

Unable to resist anymore, Tommy plopped down on the couch. It was even squishier than he’d thought it would be. A blanket was tossed at him.

“Warm up, idiot child that wore a t-shirt outside when it’s almost winter,” Wilbur ordered.

Tommy stuck his tongue out at him but wrapped the blanket around himself. “Find me food, Wilbur?” Tommy pleaded.

“Phil’s stress cooking,” Technoblade offered.

“Great,” Wilbur said, clapping his hands. “I’ll be right back.”

And then it was Tommy and Technoblade alone again. “You scared the fuck out of me this morning,” Tommy accused. “I thought you were going to axe murder me.”

“...Why?”

“Saying ominous shit like ‘I have been instructed not to tell you’ something is terrifying as shit, man. You can’t just say that. I’ll think myself into assuming it’s something bad.”

“I’ll tell you ‘I have been instructed not to tell you about something good’ next time.”

Tommy considered that. “That’ll work honestly.”

“Noted,” Techno said. He eyed Tommy over his book. “So, make a decision?”

“I think so,” Tommy said. “I have one more question for you though.”

“What?”

“Ghostbur said you escaped The Pit?”

He tilted his head. “I did, yes.”

Tommy nodded. “And Phil mentioned you want to try to get other people out of there. That that is why you wanted the one ball thing I stopped you from stealing.”

“Yeah.”

“I’m guessing that’s for the mental barrier and not the physical one. Do you have a way through the physical part yet?”

“No,” Technoblade said, “but we know there are some weak spots, just not where. We figured we’d find one after figuring out the rest.”

Tommy nodded. “There’s a tunnel,” he said. “If you go down into the sewers at Heart St. and Roberts Ave. and follow it down keeping left, you can find where an old tunnel collapsed at one point after The Pit was made. It made a little hole in the physical barrier. It’s only, like, 4 feet tall, but if you could account for the mental barrier as well, you could probably get an adult through it. The drunks on the West side used to play a game where they got as close as they could to it before the mental barrier forced them back, but if someone’s not drunk and scared enough, they can get through it.”

“You’ve been in The Pit,” he concluded.

“Tubbo and I are both from there too, yeah. Thought it’d be good for you to know if we’re going to be sticking around.”

Technoblade studied him for a few moments. He seemed to struggle to figure out what to say. Eventually, he seemed to come to a decision. “Horrible fucking place,” he grunted.

Tommy snorted. “Horrible fucking place,” he agreed.

Chapter End Notes

Tommy: What? You think I'm going to just jump out of a window and flee the premises?

Phil: *squints*

Tommy (5 minutes later): Jumps out of a window and flees the premises.

Also:

Wilbur used the ghostly equivalent of 'I licked it, so it's mine now.' It was very effective.

How'd you like the ominous Dream superpower foreshadowing, huh? :)

Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Wilbur stepped into the kitchen where clearly Phil had been and still was taking out all of his anxieties on the whisk currently in his hands. Wilbur snagged a muffin from the muffin tin cooling on the counter before Phil could react. He took a large bite out of the top.

“These are hot!” Wilbur exclaimed when he burned the roof of his mouth on the bite he’d taken.

“No shit,” Phil replied. He looked concerned for a moment about the distress in Wilbur’s voice, but as soon as he realized why Wilbur was distressed, he lobbed the nearest soft object (which happened to be an oven mitt) at his face. “I just took them out of the oven.”

Wilbur took another smaller and more cautious bite of the muffin, but he still had to chew with his mouth open a few times to escape the discomfort of burning pastry in his mouth.

Phil observed his mastication with visible disapproval and disgust.

“They’re good,” Wilbur managed to choke out after swallowing the bite. He moved to start peeling the paper off the bottom part of the muffin, just about burning his fingers doing so. A good part of the sides of the muffin came off with the paper.

Phil shook his head. A moment later, he narrowed his eyes at him and crossed his arms. “And are you even allowed back inside yet?”

Wilbur took another bite of his muffin. “If you wanted to keep him away from me, you really shouldn’t have let the kid jump out of a window.”

Phil blinked and frowned. “He jumped out of a window?”

“You gave him back his chicken powers and left him alone, what did you think he was going to do?”

Phil sighed, but he honestly didn’t seem too surprised. “I was hoping he’d explore the room.”

“Oh, yeah, like a normal fucking child, Dad? He may be Tommy, but he’s also the Red Glider. Doth thou forget the trash shoot incident so quickly?”

Phil hit the whisk he’d been using on the side of the bowl and reached over to set it in the sink. He picked up a wooden spoon instead to start folding some cherries into the batter. “I assume he’s back inside now.”

“Yep.”

He turned to Wilbur with a considering look. “And how did that happen?”

“I’ll have you know,” Wilbur said. “He was actually coming back from a jaunt through the forest when *he* found *me*. No glue was involved.”

Phil studied him for a moment. Wilbur would almost be insulted by his suspicion if he wasn’t fully aware of its validity. “And since you’re calm, I’d assume he wants to stay.”

“Baby brothers, Phil,” Wilbur said feeling his smile widen. “One is currently destroying a city and the other is going to divebomb us from treetops as soon as he’s feeling slightly better. I’m going to teach them all about being morally grey supervillains.”

“Wilbur...” Phil began to protest.

“You are not to have a say in this,” Wilbur declared. “You still think too much like a hero. It’s up to Techno and me. We already had the sometimes-kidnapping-is-okay-actually lesson with both of them. Tubbo seems pretty good on the domestic terrorism for the greater good lesson. Tommy’s already expressed an interest in petty theft. I just have to teach him to steal stuff from evil megacorporations instead of... my room and the kitchen which he has implied to me already will be his main targets. Next, will be how to can vegetables because we’re going to need all of the help we can get, and money laundering.

“You are not teaching the children crime!” Phil protested.

“They already *know* crime,” Wilbur pointed out. “Plus, they’re good skills to know in case they ever want to get into the family business down in the road. In 14 years.”

“In 14 years?”

“They’re not allowed to commit crime until they’re in their 30s.”

“Ah.”

Wilbur finally managed to finish off his now slightly cooler, but still warm muffin. “Can I take these to the living room? I need to feed a gremlin.”

“Sure. Just put them on a plate first.”

Wilbur went to the cabinet while Phil began to pour the cherry filled batter into a loaf pan. He arranged the 11 still warm muffins on a plate and took them into the living room.

Tommy had curled up under the blanket Wilbur had tossed at him, and now just his face was showing. He looked like a particularly adorable feral racoon. The comparison became even more valid when his eyes narrowed in immediately on the food in Wilbur’s hands. Wilbur picked a muffin up off the plate and held the offering out to him. A hand snuck out of the blanket bundle, and he grabbed it. He immediately took a nibble out of the top and his eyes lit up.

So many things. Wilbur was going to feed this child so many things.

“What’s this?” he asked. He thankfully knew that he shouldn’t eat the paper lining on the muffin, because he began to peel it off before taking another larger bite.

“Chocolate chip muffin,” Wilbur replied as he set the plate down on the coffee table and took a seat next to him on the couch.

“It’s good,” Tommy said, eyes shining.

“Phil makes good muffins,” Wilbur said, picking one up and tossing it at Techno who grabbed it out of the air without looked away from the book in his lap. “He used to hide vegetables in them so Tech wouldn’t die of scurvy.”

“He was not hiding them,” Techno protested, glaring at Wilbur. “He was just making them more palatable for me.”

Wilbur leaned in closer to Tommy. “Which is obviously why Phil swore me to secrecy when I saw him put shredded carrots in them once,” he whispered, making Tommy laugh through a bite of muffin.

A pillow hit his nose with pinpoint accuracy a second later. “Stop trying to make me look ridiculous to the kid.”

Wilbur tossed the pillow in his lap to the side and leaned back against the couch. “Oh, father dearest,” he called.

“Aw, shit,” Phil replied immediately. After a few moments, he came down the hall sans the apron he’d been wearing earlier to bake. “What?” he asked.

“How’d Tech figure out you put veggies in the muffins?”

“He caught me putting shredded carrots into the batter when you couldn’t distract him for long enough. Why?”

Wilbur grinned at Technoblade victoriously and threw the pillow back at him.

Phil sighed. “What argument did I just allow myself to get dragged into?”

“If Technoblade ever willingly ate his vegetables as a child or if you had to trick him,” Tommy supplied.

Phil turned to Techno. “You never ate your vegetables without trickery or emotional manipulation, and you know it,” he said dryly. Tommy and Wilbur both laughed at the way Techno glared at him. Tommy polished off his first muffin and Wilbur saw him look longingly at the rest of the muffins from the corner of his eye. Wilbur leaned forward to grab another one from the plate and handed it to him.

“And that,” Wilbur concluded, smug, “Is how I ended up taller than you.”

Techno turned his glare to Wilbur. “You were supposed to grow up to be short like Phil,” he grumbled. “It wasn’t fair.”

“Should have eaten more spinach, Wilbur taunted. There had been no way he could have known he’d end up taller. In fact, Technoblade had ended up a few inches taller in this timeline than he had the first time around. Both times he’d been taller than Phil by 16. Yet, Wilbur had been extremely pleased when his threats (given out as a good and kind older brother) that if Techno didn’t eat all of his green beans, Wilbur would be taller than him had ended up being true despite the perceived genetic disadvantage.

“Well,” contemplated Technoblade, “if I were to take a knife and...”

“No,” Phil said.

“It’s just an inch Phil. It wouldn’t be that bad if I...”

“No.”

Tommy, captivated by the conversation, practically inhaled his second muffin, and then looked sad when he realized his muffin no longer existed.

Laughing to himself, Wilbur reached over to grab him yet another muffin. Yet, as he went to hand it to him, his eyes caught on a suspicious red dot on the boy's wrist. "What's that on your arm?" Wilbur asked.

"Oh," Tommy said, turning his arm to look down at the indicated blemish and, as a result, giving Wilbur a better look at the mark that had been hidden under the suppression cuff before today. Wilbur immediately knew exactly what type of thing it was and immediately did not like that he had it. "Well..."

"Why the hell do you have Nether magic on your wrist?" Wilbur asked, recognizing the very faint red glow coming from the mark that was characteristic of all magic that came from the Nether. No one really knew what made the magic one could only get in the Nether, but the methods to get it were never good. The rumors he knew about said it often included a sacrifice of some sort. The one confirmed method he knew of that someone used to get Nether magic was literally giving up his free will to a black endless hole that whispered promises to him.

Tommy blinked at him, then at Techno, and then at him again. "You know what this is?"

"Yes," Wilbur said. "Where did you get it?"

He glanced at Techno again. "Well, uh, the Pit," he answered. "Obviously. Tubbo and I kind of grew up there."

"You what?" Wilbur asked and a fraction of his not even close to being processed emotions about that revelation must have been clear in his tone and on his face because Tommy stared at him wide-eyed and then looked over at Technoblade for help. Wilbur whipped his head around to look at Technoblade himself. "You knew!" he accused.

"He told me, like, 2 minutes ago, Will. Chill."

"Don't tell me to chill, Technoblade," Wilbur snapped. "Not only is he from the fucking Nether, but he has Nether magic in his skin!"

"Kid seems fine," Technoblade said. "Pit magic doesn't necessarily kill you." Which was true. Technoblade had Nether magic on him the entire first timeline because he'd been given a tracker once he'd started winning in the fighting ring and became valuable. Of course, it hadn't mattered much once he was on the surface, because no one could get to him to track him down. Still, it wasn't exactly something Wilbur wanted to see on someone he cared about.

He frowned at Technoblade and then at Tommy. "C'mere," he requested, reaching for him.

He was so funny, because he full on let Wilbur scoop him up into his lap, only to start complaining immediately. "No, you bastard! You're being fussy again."

"Let me see," he tsked, grabbing his arm to get a better look. The mark looked small enough at least. Unless it went way under the skin, it wouldn't be powerful enough to do much. It was smaller even than the basic trackers a lot of people got in the Nether for different reasons. "How did you get this?" he asked, tracing it. It was slightly raised. "Do you know what you have to do to get that stuff?"

Tommy rolled his eyes, unconcerned and tried to wiggle his arm away from Wilbur's scrutiny. "I didn't sell my first-born child for it or anything; I'm not stupid. It was a gift."

Wilbur frowned at that, even more worried. "If you're not paying, you're probably the product."

"I am not," Tommy insisted. "Mabel's nice. She took off Tubbo's tracker his dad put on him and made these out of it. They're a closed loop between just Tubbo and I, so no one's tracking us or anything. They can't even let us track each other. They just let us tell each other if we're in danger and would turn into just an outline if one of us dies. It's how I knew something happened to Tubbo when you took him. It's harmless."

Wilbur frowned. "You don't know that for sure. It's all dangerous."

"We've had them since we were 10 and they haven't done anything," Tommy assured. "It's recycled magic anyway, so neither of us paid that type of cost for it."

"Mmm," he said, still skeptical. "Mabel, who?"

"I dunno. She was a lady who owned a store on the main street in the Pit," he replied. "What are you going to do, go stroll into the Pit and track her down to see for yourself if she's evil or not?"

"I mean, yes," he said and when Tommy looked like he was about to ask the obvious question, he continued. "I'm a ghost when I'm asleep, remember? I don't abide by the rules of the living all of the time. The barriers have no effect on Ghostbur."

"You can go to the Pit?" Tommy asked.

"How did you think we had an ally in the Nether to let out?"

"I thought it was someone Techno knew," he reasoned.

"Techno left the Nether when he was 6 and didn't know many nicer people besides. I wander around down there most nights."

"Why though?"

"Mostly I'm trying to make sure the world doesn't end because someone bargains something they shouldn't for Nether magic like this," Wilbur said, brushing his finger across the mark again.

"My Nether magic is fine," Tommy insisted. "You're just melodramatic."

"Am not."

"Are too."

"Am not."

"Are too."

"Am-" Phil nudged him with a foot and shot him a look that said to be the adult which was not fair because Tommy had started it.

Phil smiled at Tommy softly. Wilbur could see the worry in his eyes that he was hiding. Tommy had already clearly had not a great childhood, but the revelation that he was a Pit baby meant he probably

had a lot more issues than they realized. Phil always harbored a bit more guilt about the fact that the Pit existed, because unlike Wilbur who had known he hated it from the moment he woke up alive at 8 and Techno who had been a victim of it, Phil had once been part of the problem. He'd had no part of making it, of course, but he'd turned a blind eye just like most people, civilians and heroes, did until he'd met Techno.

"Is that why you cried when I talked about us freeing the Nether?" Phil asked.

Tommy bristled. "I did not cry!" he claimed, though Wilbur was pretty sure Phil had no reason to lie or embellish. "Though, uh yeah. No one's really cared before." He ducked his head. "So that was, yeah."

"Well, I care," Phil said, and Wilbur knew he meant it. The look on Tommy's face said he at least somewhat knew as well.

"Anyway," Tommy said, desperately deflecting. Wilbur squeezed him. "I think Tubbo will like that you care too. He's always been the mopey one about it." Wilbur had a feeling that he was projecting but didn't say anything. Still, it was probably somewhat true that Tubbo cared if he was also from the Nether.

"Speaking of," Wilbur said. "Once you finish that muffin, you should call Tubbo."

"But what if I want another muffin?" Tommy asked with a pout.

"Well," Wilbur said with a smile. "I did just see Phil put cherry bread into the oven a few minutes ago. If you stop at three muffins, you'll have room for when it comes out."

"Is cherry bread good?" he asked.

"It's very good," Wilbur promised.

"It's not like Technoblade's weird bread, then?"

Techno huffed from the other side of the room somewhere between amused and annoyed.

"Nah, Phil made it. It's soft and sweet."

"Mmm, fine," he replied, shoving the rest of the muffin in his mouth. "Can I have your phone?"

"Maybe you should do it in your room," Phil suggested. "In case you want to talk to him privately for a bit. I'd prefer no window jumping this time though."

"Sure," Tommy agreed and climbed out of Wilbur's lap to his feet. Wilbur had to lead him to the room since he did not know the layout of the house yet. They'd have to do a tour. He took a seat on his bed when they got there, and Wilbur handed him his cell phone.

"Want me to leave?" he asked.

Tommy shook his head and patted the bed near where his feet were. Wilbur took a seat at the end of the bed and watched as Tommy dialed Tubbo's number on the phone.

"Tubbo!" he exclaimed once the phone call was answered. "Guess what? I'm not longer a prisoner!" There was a pause. "No, well, I'm still with them, but I'm not in a cell and I don't have the power

suppressant anymore.” He bobbed his head along to whatever Tubbo said in response. “Anyway, they offered us a job.”

“It’s not a job,” Wilbur corrected immediately.

Tommy glanced at him. “Right, right,” he said. “So, it’s not exactly a job. It sounds like more of a mentorship type thing or something, kind of like what people said it was like at the Guild before we got there.”

“We’re nothing like the Guild,” Wilbur said darkly.

Tommy waved him off flippantly and Wilbur glared at him, reaching forward to pinch his shoulder. He was batted away idly. “But unlike the Guild we wouldn’t really be fighting, at least for a while which would... be nice.” He leaned back absentmindedly so he was laying reclined against the pillows, barely avoiding laying on the stuffed cow Wilbur had gotten him. He laid a hand on its head without thought. “Plus, they have awesome food. Their prisoner food was good, so their ally food has got to be even better.”

“We fed you normal fucking food because we’re not assholes,” Wilbur interjected.

Tommy glanced up at him. “Still,” he said. “Good food. I’m guessing probably free medical treatment,” he looked up at Wilbur as though for confirmation.

“Yes.”

“Yeah, free medical treatment,” Tommy confirmed. “Probably too much, actually. Will is, like, overbearing with the medical stuff, so no worries there. Plus, nice room and board.”

“Board is just food again,” Wilbur pointed out, trying not to laugh.

“Yeah, well, it’s bitchin’ food,” he directed at Wilbur. Then into the phone he said, “except the bread. Do not let Mr. Blade feed you bread. It has lumps in it. Still, it seems like a good deal. Turns out Blade’s actually from the Pit too. They, uh, the stuff I’ve been stopping them from stealing is stuff they want to use to take down the barrier around the Pit.”

There was a pause while Tubbo spoke.

“I think we should help them,” Tommy said, “and they’re actually pretty nice.” He paused, and then said in a bit quieter tone. “I want to accept.”

There were a lot of words said on Tubbo’s side that Wilbur could not hear after that.

“I don’t know,” Tommy replied to something.

“Dunno,” he said again.

“Well, I didn’t ask,” he said a few moments later.

“Is that important?”

“Was I supposed to?”

Then after a bit longer, he looked up at Wilbur. “He wants to talk to you.”

Wilbur blinked. "Okay," he replied. Tommy sat up to hand him the phone, but then immediately sprawled back against the pillows.

"Whippoorwill again, I'm guessing," Tubbo said before Wilbur even had a chance to speak.

"Yeah," he said. "Just Will works for now, if you'd prefer."

He did not acknowledge that. "So," Tubbo said. "What's the deal then?"

"Pretty much what Tommy said," Wilbur answered. "Food, bed, anything you need really."

"Oh, I got the benefits," Tubbo said. "I'm asking why, which is seems Tommy did not seem to think about asking."

Ah. "What do you want to know?"

"What do you expect to get out of the deal? I assume you saw my show?" He sounded dispassionate and in control, like a cold-hearted supervillain negotiating an alliance with another one. He did not know that Wilbur knew him. The shoe didn't exactly fit even if he was probably considered an enemy of the Guild by this point, but he did put on a good show.

"We did, yes. You're powers and strategy are impressive, but that's not the major reason for the offer."

"What is then?" he asked.

"A mix of we like Tommy and fuck the Guild."

A pause. "Well," he said softly. "We can agree on that at least." Then his tone hardened again, "but you still haven't answered about what you'd want from us."

"Not really anything," Wilbur said. "We don't allow minors to fight for us. The main benefit is getting you away from the heroes."

"So, it'd be more like training than anything until we're adults?"

Wilbur had to tread lightly. He did not want to lie, but he also knew enough about Tubbo to be aware that an offering of family fun times was not going to put him at ease. "There can be training if you'd like," he said. "We'd probably not want you to fight at least a little past adulthood. Eighteen isn't some magic number. When Philza used to work for the Superhero Guild, you couldn't even apply until you were 18 and would train for at least a year if not more depending on your job before seeing combat. He left a lot of hero stuff behind when he quit, but he kept that mindset. Ironically, it seems like the heroes didn't."

Tubbo thought for a few long moments before coming up with a question that surprised Wilbur. "Why did Philza quit the Guild?" he asked.

"Why do you want to know?"

"Well, I just quit the Guild as well," he said. "I have my reasons. I want to know his. It seems like an important thing to know if we're going to be allies."

Wilbur hummed and thought for a moment. "He'd been acting out of line at work for a while," he said. "Nothing major, but he liked to ask questions people didn't like and poked his nose into things he thought smelled rotten. A team of 6 heroes who'd been up to some shady shit decided to nab his

14-year-old kid pretending to be villains and hoping that the threat to his family and subsequent ‘saving’ by one of the heroes would make him back off and step in line.” Tommy sat up slightly, knowing the twist to that tale. Wilbur tried not to smile too wide because that’d probably make him look like a maniac. “Despite it being clearly justified, the higher ups at the Guild were a bit pissed when I managed to take out the gag and proceeded to scream so loud their chests exploded. Though, they ended up blaming Blade for it. Philza had enough of their bullshit and quit then.” It was... a bit of an oversimplification of events, but Wilbur didn’t have time to explain everything that had happened there. It would take explaining Techno’s powers, Ghostbur, how Wilbur’s powers and Ghostbur reacted to each other, and some other things. What he said was enough to get the point across. He let Tubbo absorb the story for a few seconds. “So?” he finally prompted.

“One last thing,” Tubbo requested.

“Sure.”

“You *hated* Tommy a week ago,” he accused.

“Yeah,” Wilbur said. “And a few years ago, Philza and Blade first met at sword point. Things change. We’re willing to let them.” His mouth curled up at the side. “Plus, he can be cute when he’s not kicking me in the face.”

“I’m not cute!” Tommy shrieked, pointing at him accusingly. “I’m manly and handsome.” Wilbur rolled his eyes and then there was a socked foot in his face. It smacked him not hard enough to do any damage but enough to knock his glasses askew.

“I said when you’re *not* kicking me in the face,” Wilbur spat, grabbing the offending ankle in a vice grip.

“Give me back the phone! You’re spreading lies and slander,” he screamed, attempting to wiggle his foot away.

A put-upon sigh came through the phone. Obviously, Tubbo could hear Tommy’s tantrum. “I’m sorry about him.”

“No need,” Wilbur said. “We’re fully aware of what we’re inviting into our home. He’s unfortunately endearing even when he’s *trying to bite me!*” He had to remove the phone from his ear to shove Tommy’s head away (not wanting to release the foot). Though, to be fair, it didn’t seem like the dramatic chomping was actually meant to result in a bite. “I’m sure you understand,” he said when Tommy gave up on the bite threats and went back to trying to wiggle his foot away, kicking Wilbur’s hand with his free leg.

“I do. Unfortunately,” Tubbo said. Wilbur could hear him breathe out slowly. “Okay. I’ll hear you out,” he finally said, “but we meet on my turf, and you bring Tommy.”

“Of course,” Wilbur said. “Just give me a time and place and, uh, maybe make a path for us around the garden you currently have going on.

“My and Tommy’s apartment. He knows where it is.” So did Wilbur, but Wilbur left that out. “How soon can you get here?”

“Give us an hour and a half.”

“Fine. Where would you be coming from, so I can clear a path?”

“We enter city limits on Route 6.”

“Fine.”

“Great. Will you talk to Tommy again now before he hurts himself trying to beat me up?”

“Sure,” he said, and just a hint of amusement managed to leak into his tone.

Wilbur practically threw the phone at the feral child who snatched it up quickly.

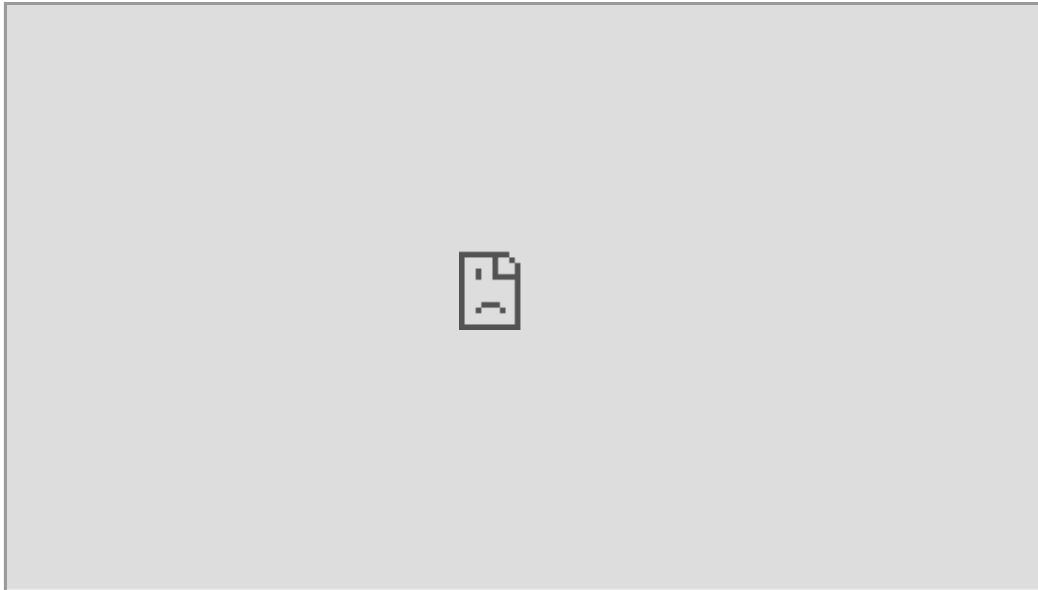
“Tubbo, he has been spreading lies and slander,” Tommy declared and then frowned. “Whaddya mean stop kicking the supervillain? He deserves it!” Wilbur rolled his eyes and finally released Tommy’s ankle.

“I’m going to go check if the cherry bread’s ready,” Wilbur said. “You two can talk in private for a bit, yeah. Come back to the living room when you’re done.”

“Okay,” Tommy agreed.

“Pick out something warmer to wear for when we go back outside too, yeah.”

Tommy rolled his eyes. “Fusspot,” he declared, and Wilbur smiled, getting to his feet. He ruffled Tommy’s hair briefly and even patted the top of the stuffed cow’s head making him smile. Then, he turned to go check on the sweets in the kitchen, leaving the two friends to talk alone.



Chapter End Notes

A live video of Tommy and Wilbur in this chapter. (The one they're just tossing food on the ground for is Techno.) [Here](#)

It doesn't let me embed videos into the notes, so I put it in the chapter proper above.

Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“You should teach me how to drive.”

Technoblade glanced back at Tommy via the rearview mirror of his car. They’d taken Techno’s van to pick up Tubbo since Wilbur’s civilian car was small, and they wanted to have room in case the two teenagers wanted to take anything from their apartment. Tommy had chosen to sit in the middle back seat and was currently leaning forward slightly to press his hands to the back of the center console like it was a table and he was making an important argument in a business meeting. He was once again in the sweater which had once belonged to Wilbur and that he’d laid permanent claim to. Techno was already worrying about how they were going to get him to wash the damned thing. He had a feeling Tommy wasn’t going to like the idea of parting with it.

“Technoblade,” Tommy said insistently when he didn’t get an answer fast enough.

“No.”

“But why not?” Tommy whined. “I’m old enough to learn.”

“You once crashed a shopping cart into a guardrail while you were riding standing up in it and flew head over heels into a river.”

“Yeah, well,” Tommy sniffed, “maybe that was intentional.”

“Was it?” Techno asked skeptically. “Was it really?”

“Yes.”

“All of it?”

“...Yes,” he blatantly lied.

“Mmm?”

“Well, I got away from you dicks, didn’t I?” he asked. Techno glanced at the mirror again and caught him sticking his tongue out at him.

“Ah, yes,” Wilbur contributed. “Thwarted by ‘Look, I don’t know about you guys, but it’s 5 degrees outside and I don’t really want to get my pants wet. I say we just take the L.’”

“If we’d gotten really lucky, he might have drowned.”

Technoblade’s seat was kicked.

“Don’t kick the driver’s seat,” Technoblade scolded. “That’s dangerous. Who raised you?”

“I raised myself!” he proclaimed.

“Fair enough,” Techno said with a shrug. He noticed Tommy move a bit, shifting around to try to get more comfortable. He’d been subtly holding the seatbelt away from his skin the entire car ride, so it didn’t brush his healing wound. He hadn’t said anything yet, but he seemed to be a bit sore today. It was likely from all of the bouncing around he’d apparently done outside. Even just walking to the car, he’d seemed a bit tense, though he covered for it well.

“Wilbur, will you teach me to drive?” he asked.

“Nah.”

Techno heard a different seat being kicked.

“Don’t do that,” Wilbur said, turning around to glare at him.

“Or what? You’re not driving,” he said, kicking the seat again.

“I can come back there.”

“Yeah? And do what?”

Wilbur paused. Considered. He reached back and grabbed at him playfully. Tommy leaned back quickly from where he’d been sitting forward, so Wilbur could not reach him. “Well, if you were Techno, I’d probably say I could strangle you with that seatbelt,” he said lightly.

“Try it bitch.” Tommy challenged with no hesitation and kicked the seat once more. Well, it was official. His fear of Wilbur was now 0. Big L to Wilbur.

Wilbur narrowed his eyes and reached over as though to click the release button on his seatbelt.

“If we bring him ‘round with strangulation marks, the Plant God will kill us,” Techno cautioned.

“I’m sure he’ll let a few slide,” Wilbur said. “The guy’s *lived* with him.”

“Tubbo would not!” Tommy insisted. “He got really mad last time I came home with some.”

“Okay, well, that dipped straight back into concerning,” Wilbur turned fully in his seat to face him. “You understand that that is concerning?”

“I was a hero, Wilbur,” Tommy said flippantly. “Not every criminal that got their hands on me just gave me a sweater.”

Wilbur did unbuckle his seatbelt then, so he could reach into the backseat to do something Techno couldn’t see. Knowing him, Techno assumed cupping his cheek or something of the like. “Do you have a name?” he asked sweetly.

“Uh, no,” Tommy said. “It was just some guy on the street. Managed to smack him with a nearby brick and get away. Why?”

Wilbur didn’t answer that question directly. “I’ll put it on Dream’s tab then.”

“Dream’s tab?” Tommy asked curiously.

“Nothing,” Wilbur assured. “Not a big deal.”

There was a pause. “Teach me to drive, please, Wilbur?” Tommy tried again, this time with his voice all soft and pleading. The clever little bastard.

Wilbur laughed. “Nice try. You aren’t touching my car, you gremlin.”

He moved to sit back in his seat properly as Tommy visibly pouted in the rearview mirror. “Fine, then. I’ll ask Phil. I’m sure he’ll teach me.”

“No,” both Wilbur and Techno said at the same time.

“What?” Tommy asked, startled. “Why?”

“Did you notice there were only three cars in the garage?” Techno asked.

“Uh, yeah.”

“Supervillain car, Wilbur’s car, my car,” Techno supplied. “Phil doesn’t drive.”

“Phil is never allowed to drive again.”

“Why? What did he do?” Tommy asked, curiously.

“What didn’t he do?” Wilbur grumbled. “Man could set a world record for the most simultaneous traffic violations with his eyes closed, and he’d probably be driving better than normal with his eyes closed.”

“We had a party when Wilbur got his license,” Techno said. “Had a cake and everything.”

“That was my birthday party, jackass,” Wilbur said, “but yeah, I confiscated Phil’s keys that day and never gave them back.”

“The insurance company wept for joy, and so did I. Car crashes seem like horrible ways to go.”

“Well,” Tommy said, his voice smug. “He sounds like a fun person to learn from...”

...

Technoblade sighed. “I’ll teach you to drive.”

“Yes!” Tommy violently pumped a fist into the air in victory. However, he clearly had gotten too excited because he gave a little pained exhale and curled back into himself with a grimace.

“Weak,” Wilbur commented.

“I will kick you out of this car, Wilbur,” Techno said, blandly, and then, “You good back there?”

“Never better,” Tommy replied with a thumbs up. “I’m a 100% fully functioning Big Man Tommy.”

Wilbur and Techno exchanged a glance. “You want some Tylenol?” Wilbur offered.

“No. Fuck you.”

“Tommy...”

“I don’t want to be tired to see Tubbo.”

“They won’t even make you drowsy. They’re what I use for headaches.”

“No.”

“What is your thing about pain pills?” Wilbur asked.

“Don’t need them.”

Wilbur sighed. “Whatever Tommy,” he said, giving up for now. Techno had no doubts that the conversation would be coming back around eventually.

They arrived at the edges of the city a few minutes later. The city seemed somehow more overgrown than it had only the day before, though it was also a bit less active at first glance. At least, no superheroes were being flung through the air at the moment. Between the stillness and the number of plants, it made it look like they were about to wander into a long overgrown ancient city. Though, the buildings were made of steel and not stone.

Today, their way into the city was not blocked off. The trees that had been growing out of the asphalt in front of them had disappeared. The holes that the growth of said trees had made seemed to be covered in a mess of wood and vines. Techno slowed the car, but the makeshift bridges seemed to easily be able to hold the weight of the vehicle.

“Wow, Tubbo grew a lot of plants,” Tommy said, far too casually given the fact that Tubbo owned the entire city at this point.

As Techno drove, the path to the boys’ apartment was very clear considering it was the only one they could take. Every other street was overgrown, and there was just enough room for their car to get through on the passable roads. Techno half expected plants to grow in behind them like a horror movie to block their way out. “I reiterate, Wilbur. If I die by tree, I’m blaming you.”

“You won’t die by tree,” Tommy scoffed. “Tubbo’s harmless.”

“...Right,” said Techno, wondering how many heroes were in the hospital currently. He continued to dutifully follow the path through the jungle-city as it wound its way through plant covered streets all the way to a set of apartments just barely within walking distance to the Superhero Guild. He noticed there was practically a wall of plants blocking off the apartment from the rest of the city, the only entry point being the one they were currently using.

“This the place?” Techno asked. Techno hadn’t been expecting much, but the building looked like it was falling apart, at least on the outside. (There were also plants everywhere, but Techno was ignoring that in his analysis.)

“Yep,” Tommy replied.

“It looks like it should be condemned.”

“Yep!” Tommy agreed, “it was the only thing in walking distance we could afford though, so we made it work.”

Phil’s paycheck while working for the Guild had been able to support three people very comfortably and he’d had plenty left over. Two superhero paychecks should have been able to get much more than this, level one intern things or no. The fact that they could just barely scrape by with enough to afford the bare minimum was suspicious. It stank of deliberately constructed poverty.

It reminded him of the stricter food policies the city had enacted a decade ago. These policies had been disguised as policies for public health. It regulated food sources and required inspections of food distributors. It sounded legitimate in theory and was phrased in a way that was easy for the public to swallow, but in reality, it had been specifically designed to make getting enough food difficult. Lower income houses could technically scrape by with the inflated prices and lower supplies, but only just. That way, when the government offered options for more food with many strings attached, people couldn't claim it was something like extortion. They *could* go without, technically, but it wasn't a good time. Most families were willing to give up things like privacy to feed themselves.

It also made him think of the lawfully generated blood drought. Due to increased regulations, people and their families were forced to pay more for blood infusions when injured because it often had to be imported instead of sourcing from the city itself. Legally people were not allowed to voluntarily give blood to a hospital without a court order. Every so often, there would be a blood drive where people like cops, heroes, and especially politicians would give blood publicly. This increased public opinion of these people even though these were the people who had created the blood drought in the first place.

The Guild had wanted to force Tommy and Tubbo's hand with *something* and they had apparently not succeeded.

Which was honestly hilarious. Good on those two.

Tommy had brought a bright red backpack Ghostbur had bought him and unzipped it to put Henry (who he'd insisted on taking on this trip) into it before unbuckling his seatbelt. They all got out of the car and Tommy led them to a set of stairs Techno had a hard time seeing through the copious amounts of foliage.

"Oh! Tubbo fixed the stairs," Tommy said, and indeed, it appeared a tree had grown its trunk into the shape of steps and then died. Again, Techno couldn't help but think of a horror movie where a house in the middle of the woods was sentient and proceeded to eat the main characters.

Tommy started to take the stairs two at a time, but then slowed immediately, remembering he was in pain. Wilbur looked at Tommy like *he* was in pain. Idiots. The both of them.

It was clear which apartment was the one they were going to when they made it to the top of the stairs. The door was covered in vines and flowers. Again, it seemed to say: here is your destination... if you want to be stolen by the fae.

Still, Techno didn't protest when Tommy walked over to it and knocked twice. The door opened almost immediately, though Tommy had already thrown himself at the boy on the other side before Techno could get a good look at his face.

"Tubbo!" Tommy enthused.

Tubbo accepted but did not yet return the embrace. His eyes did a quick, cagey scan of Techno and Wilbur lingering a few meters away. He slowly raised his arms to hug him back, the expression on his face saying: *I have and will kill for this person*, and, well, Technoblade could respect that one.

"I," Tubbo told Tommy mildly, "am going to use you for fertilizer."

"I thought you were never going to talk to me again," Tommy teased. He went to draw away, but Tubbo's arms locked around his back. He sighed and settled his head on the shorter boy's shoulder. "Clingy Tubbo," he said as though he were not the one to initiate the hug in the first place.

“You’re an idiot,” Tubbo replied. His eyes had never left Techno and Wilbur.

“Am not!” Tommy said. “I am very smart.”

Tubbo gave it a few seconds and then pulled back, shoving Tommy rather hard until he stumbled, perhaps too hard considering the boy was still sore. “Yeah? Tell that to the fucking blood stains on the bathroom floor. We’re never getting back our deposit.”

“Oh, the deposit. Is that what you’re upset about?” Tommy asked.

“Obviously not!” Tubbo snapped. “Do have any idea what could have happened to you, you pretentious motherfucker?”

“I mean,” Tommy said. “Yeah. I did. I do.” The ‘and I’d do it again,’ went unsaid but was well heard.

“Not allowed,” Tubbo hissed. “You’re not allowed to do that shit to me.”

“For you,” Tommy protested.

“To me. Fuck off. I was so much more worried about you than I’d been about myself.”

“It was fine!” Tommy said. “I’m fine.”

“You got your ass stabbed!”

“That was before any of that! They even fixed that.”

“You didn’t know that going in,” Tubbo accused. “We both know you fucked off to die like an idiot.”

“Well, maybe I did,” Tommy said, sounding annoyed. “So, what?”

Silence. One of the vines creeping up the door lashed out and smacked him with a flower.

“Hey! The fuck was that for!”

“The next time you attempt to die for me, I’ll take your life myself.”

“But I’m *fine*,” he whined. “Look!” He hopped up and down a few times using his powers to make the jumps much springier than usual. He ended up hopping up onto one of the countertops in the kitchen nearby. Said countertop did not look like it could support his weight. It probably couldn’t actually, now that Techno looked at it closer. He was likely just using his powers to keep it from crumbling under him.

“Tommy, you’re still hurt,” Wilbur said with a frown. “Stop doing shit like that. You’ll just make it worse.”

“I’m *fine*,” he insisted, and he surprisingly actually seemed to be moving without much pain even though he’d seemed fairly sore when they’d been climbing the steps. He turned to reach up and dig through one of the high cabinets above the sink.

Tubbo looked on seeming drained. He half collapsed onto one of, what seemed to be, the only two chairs in the apartment. Techno winced as he did so because that chair looked like a health hazard. Not that the other hard backed one which looked like a fly could knock it over was much better.

Wilbur decided then that it was about time to not stand awkwardly in the hallway outside of the apartment door and walked in. Technoblade shuffled in behind him and closed the door once inside.

The apartment was... about what Technoblade had assumed it would be after seeing the outside. Namely, Techno had probably slept in less trashy alleyways. He'd definitely slept in a less trashy old, abandoned train car. Wilbur looked around, thinly veiled disgust on his face as though he'd never seen the place before. To be fair, he'd never had to physically touch anything in the apartment before. Still, Techno pointedly rolled his eyes at him.

Tubbo leaned back in his repugnant chair, seeming to be trying to look like he'd sat with an air of nonchalance when in reality the dark circles under his eyes implied lack of sleep, malnutrition, and an overexertion of his powers. Also, his haughty expression was belied by his barefooted best friend standing on the edge of his sink and digging through a cabinet like a wild scavenging animal that found its way into a house. As Technoblade watched, Tommy tossed a towel out of the cabinet onto the floor without a care in the world.

...

Wait, where did Tommy's *shoes* go?

"Hello," Wilbur said. "It's, uh, nice to meet you again, Tubbo."

Tubbo seemed unimpressed by the greeting. "Hi."

"My name is Wilbur, by the way. You should probably know considering the deal."

"Will is your real name?" Tubbo asked skeptically.

"They all have stupid as hell supervillain names," Tommy interjected, head completely in the cabinet and pieces of cloth and plastic falling into the sink as he dug through it. "They're not good at secret identities. Guess what Blade's name is?"

"It's Technoblade," Techno said.

Tubbo considered him. "Middle ring name?" he asked. Right. Tommy probably would have told Tubbo about their shared place of origin.

"Technically," Techno replied stiffly. The fighting rings *were* in the middle ring of the Pit after all. Though, that probably wasn't exactly what Tubbo had meant and Techno had escaped before killing enough people to be named by the fighting ring owners this time around.

Tubbo looked at him curiously but did not push. He seemed to realize there was something personal and uncomfortable there.

"And Philza's name is just Phil," Tommy said. "Aha! I found it!" At this declaration, he jumped down from the counter, landing without a sound. Whatever he held in his hand was small enough for it to be completely obscured by his fist. "I knew I was saving this for something!" He twisted to dig his stuffed cow back out of his bag and then Tommy's prize was revealed when he started to tie a bright red ribbon around the cow's neck. "Look, Tubbo!" he said when he was finished tying the ribbon into a bow. He held up the cow so Tubbo could see. "His name's Henry. Wilbur gave him to me."

Tubbo's nose screwed up just a touch. It was obvious that he was wondering why his 16-year-old best friend was so clearly entranced by a stuffed animal of all things. Techno could see the blatant inability to understand that could only come from having *had* a stuffed animal as a small child, like Wilbur

who'd eventually grown bored of his and put them all in storage. Tubbo seemed to want to comment on his confusion, but ultimately appeared to make the conscious choice not to hurt Tommy in that way. "That's very nice, Tommy," he said instead.

Tommy, pleased by the approval, carefully returned Henry to his bag.

"Why don't you go pack up anything you'd like to take, Tommy," Wilbur suggested. He turned to Tubbo. "Would you like to pack too?"

"I already have," Tubbo said. He tilted his head slightly to the side where a duffle bag was sitting on the floor near his chair.

"Of course," Wilbur replied.

There was an awkward silence then as Tommy went about filling his bag with, from what Techno saw him put in there, absolutely useless junk. Of course, it didn't much matter since they'd have everything they needed back at the house.

Tubbo continued to study them with a forced calm from the chair, one hand shoved into his hoodie pocket. Techno's eyes scanned the rest of the apartment from his place near the door. He could see most of it since it was only two small rooms plus a bathroom. There was dirt all over the floor and... seeds. Tubbo had apparently readied this place to blow in case things went south. Techno had no doubts his pre-packed bag also contained seeds. There were two freshly cleaned mugs drying on the dishrack and still dripping water. The trash had been emptied before they got there. There wasn't even a new bag in it. A mess of pens were on the table, but there was a suspicious lack of paper accompanying them. Techno would not be surprised if there had been paper there an hour before, but it had all been swept up and tossed before they got there.

Technoblade did not mention any of this. It was none of his business. It was fair that he'd prepared himself for the worst possible situation. Pointing out his vigilance would likely only make it harder to calm him down.

It didn't take long for Tommy to seem satisfied with the things he'd shoved in his bag. He strapped it to his back and returned to the living room area to stand near his friend.

"Anything else?" Wilbur asked.

Tommy hummed, looking around. "Yeah, I want to take Linda!"

"Who's Linda?" Wilbur asked, sounding confused.

Tommy patted the top of the horribly dirty, ugly, broken recliner next to him. "*Linda*," he declared.

Tubbo, still seated on 'Linda,' glanced up at him. "I *knew* you were lying when you said you hadn't named this thing."

"I hadn't named her until right now."

"Bullshit. You name fucking everything all of the time. You cannot resist."

"Can so!"

"Name one thing..."

Techno and Wilbur met eyes as the children squabbled over Tommy's inanimate object naming habits. "I've seen a rat crawl out of that thing," Wilbur said, sounding pained.

"Well, yes," Techno said. "That gnawed out hole had to have come from somewhere."

"So, can I take her?" Tommy asked before Wilbur could respond.

Wilbur turned back to him, face pinched in a grimace, but still he said, "Yes, but it—"

"*She*."

"She is not coming inside until she's been thoroughly cleaned."

"Weak," Technoblade coughed.

"I'm glad you agree," Wilbur said, turning to smile at him pleasantly. "So, you'll be carrying Ms. Chair to the car then, yes?"

"Not that sort of weak, Wilbur."

"I can carry Linda," Tommy offered. "I'm not weak."

"No," Techno said.

"You were stabbed 4 days ago, child," Wilbur added on.

"I'm not a child you bitch," Tommy said, "and I'm all better now!"

"That's not how stab wounds work."

"It's how they work for me!"

"No."

"Yes!"

"*No*."

Technoblade sighed. "I guess I'm carrying 'Linda.'" He glanced at the boy still sitting in said chair watching the argument between Wilbur and Tommy continue to develop. "Am I also carrying you?" he asked. "I can, but I'd prefer not to," he said, putting on a faux exhausted tone.

Tubbo glanced up at him and a ghost of a smile crossed his face. He stood from the chair to let Techno get at it.

"Is that going to be normal?" he asked, indicating the bickering idiots.

"It's only been a few days, but judging by those few days... yeah, it's looking like it. Not sure if it'll be worse or better when Wilbur's not worrying about his health anymore."

"How on Earth did he manage to not be murdered by you outright?" Tubbo said more to himself than to Techno as Tommy started to poke Wilbur.

"Believe it or not, there was a lack of murderous intentions from the start," Techno said, "and Wilbur's weak as hell apparently."

Tubbo looked at him skeptically.

“Just wait until you see the room he designed,” Techno said, picking up the chair.

“Hmm,” Tubbo said, consideringly. He was still tensed for a fight even though he was doing his best to not appear to be. He went to pick up his duffle bag in one hand. The other remained faux casually stuffed into his hoodie pocket. The hoodie was too big for him: far too big. It’d probably be too big on Tommy. Techno hoped he wasn’t holding a kill switch or something in the pocket. That’d just be annoying if it went off. “I have a lot of seeds in this,” Tubbo warned him calmly.

Techno just inclined his head briefly in acknowledgement and turned back to the other two. “Are the two of you finished, or do I have to hold this thing for the next 10 minutes while you sort it out?” he asked.

They turned to Techno and Tubbo. “Oh, Tubbo, I can carry your bag if you want,” Wilbur suggested and Tubbo just about growled at him.

“He has his seeds in there,” Techno supplied.

“Ah,” Wilbur said. “I, uh, see. I’ll just open doors for everyone then.” He turned to go to the door and paused. “Tommy where are your *shoes*?”

“Oh right,” said Tommy. One of his shoes was still near the door, but he’d apparently kicked the other one clear across the room without anyone noticing somehow. Wilbur and Tubbo looked on with matching expressions of exasperation as he gathered the shoes up and put them on.

Then, finally, Wilbur opened the door to let Techno through. He stole Techno’s keys out of his coat pocket as he passed so he could unlock the car without Techno needing to put the chair down. Tubbo and Tommy followed him out and down the freshly grown steps to the car. He was glad they’d decided to bring the van because shoving Linda into Wilbur’s car would have been a lot harder. Tubbo seemed hesitant to put his bag in the back with the chair.

“You can keep it up with you if you want,” Techno suggested, and Tubbo nodded tersely. Tommy hopped into the backseat with his own bag and sat on the seat behind Wilbur this time instead of in the middle. Tubbo did not seem to want to get into the car, but he still joined his friend after a couple of moments of hesitation.

There was a fair amount of tension in the car as Techno started the ignition. Techno cleared his throat. “Hey, kid,” he addressed Tubbo. “Ever had a cinnamon roll as big as your head?”

“No?” Tubbo replied.

“If you clear off Second Street and Pine, I’ll buy you one.”

“You just want your fucking coffee from Niki,” Wilbur accused.

“Obviously.”

He glanced back at Tubbo in the mirror. The boy relaxed against the seat just a touch as Techno watched, the bag still securely in his lap. “Sure,” he said.

“Do I get a cinnamon roll too?” Tommy asked.

“Yes, Tommy, you get a cinnamon roll too,” Techno replied.

“Also, Tommy,” Tubbo said, turning to him.

“Yeah?”

“Why is your entire face fucking *blue*?”

Chapter End Notes

Technoblade seeing what Tubbo has done: Horror movie vibes. 🙄

Tommy seeing what Tubbo has done: Oh look! Flowers! 😊

Child 2 has been officially acquired. He's a little tense, but he has been yinked.

Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy thought long and hard about the absolute best way to explain exactly why his face was stained blue. He'd already explained that Wilbur was the cause, but Tubbo didn't seem to quite get it yet. "It's like," Tommy contemplated, "when a dog likes a fire hydrant and so it pisses on it to..."

"Don't *describe* it like that, Tommy," Wilbur interrupted, sounded disgusted and horrified. He'd turned around all the way in his seat to snap at him like a rude bitch. Tommy made eye contact for a moment before turning back to Tubbo.

"Anyway," he said. "He has a dog living in his head, yeah? Yeah, so when he falls asleep, the dog is released from his mind as an astral projection, and he goes around ghost pissing on things he likes."

Tubbo had looked confused before; now he was just staring at Tommy with a blank face. "...What?" he asked.

"You're explaining it in literally the worst possible way," Wilbur groaned.

"I am not," Tommy replied. "My explanation is perfect!"

"No, actually," Tubbo said. "I have no idea what you're trying to say." He turned to Wilbur and squinted at him. "You have a dog... in your head?"

"No," Wilbur said at the same time that Tommy correctly answered "yes."

Wilbur glared at him. "I have an astral projection power," he explained, "but I had some issues in the past which make me involuntarily astral project every time I fall asleep."

"You're power sick?" Tubbo asked.

"Sort of," Wilbur said. "It's not really my powers working too much and making me ill though, it's more that my powers are compensating for a different issue. Plus, it's not detrimental to my health unlike most things considered power sicknesses. The most I get is a little blurry in the mornings."

"And you *stain* people," Tommy interjected.

"Since my sleeping mind is controlling the projection," Wilbur continued to explain, "it tends to have fewer er... boundaries. I also leave blue stains on anything I touch in that state, which means I sometimes go around touching people without thinking about it, and I end up staining them."

"Oh, yeah, totally unintentional," Tommy sassed, not believing that part. "Also, that's exactly what I said. Ghostly astral projection piss."

"It's not *piss*. It's coming from my *hands*." He glanced over at the man in the driver's seat with a pout. "*Techno*."

Technoblade, who had been keeping his eyes resolutely on the road for the entirety of the conversation, glanced at him, lips turned down, and clearly *pissed* about being drawn into this conversation. He considered it for a moment. "It is kind of like when a dog..."

“No.”

“Yes!” Tommy cheered gleefully.

“Wait, but why do you astral project as a dog, then?” Tubbo asked, bewildered.

Wilbur just sighed and closed his eyes. “I wonder if the apartment you just vacated is for rent,” Wilbur said.

“It didn’t look like it had much hot water,” Technoblade pointed out. “I doubt you’d survive.”

“The dog’s really nice though,” Tommy said, earnestly. “Much less of a bitch than Wilbur.”

“I hate both of you.”

“Mutual,” Technoblade said without hesitation.

Tommy nodded, “mutual,” he echoed.

“Fucking assholes,” Wilbur muttered, turning back to face forward and crossing his arms over his chest.

The car slowed after only a minute more, and Technoblade parked it on the street in front of a bakery. Tommy was pretty sure it wasn’t actually in a parking spot, but the streets seemed to be abandoned at the moment, so it wasn’t like it mattered.

“Are we going in too?” Tubbo asked when both Wilbur and Technoblade took their seatbelts off.

“Yep,” Technoblade replied. He glanced back at them. “You can take your seed suitcase in if you’d like.”

Tubbo considered it but ended up leaving the suitcase in the car. “I thought we’d just go straight to your secret base,” he said to Technoblade, a bit hesitantly.

“Coffee,” Technoblade said in answer.

Wilbur rolled his eyes. “Do you like coffee Tubbo?” he asked.

Tubbo shrugged. “It’s alright,” he answered. “I am... was on the morning shift, so I learned to like it.”

“Gross,” Tommy contributed.

“Yes,” Tubbo sighed. “I know, Tommy.”

“Well, Niki makes actually good coffee,” Wilbur said, “as well as other things.”

Tommy would assume that Niki was the owner of the bakery they were about to walk into considering the name on the sign was ‘Niki’s.’

“I’m surprised it’s open,” Tubbo commented. In fact, it seemed not to be considering the open sign was not lit up.

“It is for us,” Wilbur said, pushing the door open.

“Are we doing crime to the bakery?” Tommy asked him. “Because, no offense, but that is a bit boring for supervillains. More like a low-level criminal move.”

“Hush,” Wilbur said. “No. She’s a friend. I texted her. Niki!” he called into the bakery.

“Just a minute,” a woman called back from somewhere further into the building.

Tommy glanced around the little bakery. There were a few tables near the entrance for people to sit at, though they were all empty at the moment. Most of the seats seemed cozy and they all matched. There were a couple of couches with little pillows on them and a bookcase with only one shelf dedicated to books. The other three shelves had boardgames on them.

On the far side of the room was a counter and a giant display case. It was not as filled as it could be, but there were some things in it, including half a dozen strawberry pies for some reason. A large chalkboard menu was mounted above the counter with different things the bakery offered and the corresponding prices written on it.

“Hey, Will,” the same voice that had spoken before said as a woman came into the room from a door behind the counter. She was wearing a colorful apron and had short pink hair. She blinked when she saw Tubbo and Tommy. Right... If she knew Wilbur enough to open her bakery specifically for him, she must also wonder why he suddenly was coming in with two people she’d never met. “Uh, hi Technoblade, and...?”

“This is Tommy and Tubbo,” Wilbur offered.

She continued to look at them curiously, but she didn’t press for more information. “Hello,” she greeted them with a kind smile. “It’s nice to meet you two.”

“Hi,” Tommy said. “I assume you’re the lady with the food.”

“Tommy don’t be rude,” Tubbo scolded.

“What?” he asked and got a meaningful glare in return. Unfortunately, Tommy did not know its meaning. “What?!”

“Admittedly, that one is a bit of a gremlin,” Wilbur said walking closer to the counter. Tommy flipped him off even though he probably didn’t see it. Tubbo slapped his hand down.

Niki laughed softly when she caught the gesture, but then got distracted as Wilbur offered her a greeting hug.

“What?” Tommy hissed at Tubbo while they were distracted.

“You have no idea who she is,” Tubbo said, voice aggravated, but hushed. “She could be a horrible supervillain.”

“She owns a bakery, Tubbo,” Tommy pointed out, “and we’re sort of joining the supervillains right now.”

“Yeah, and unlike you, I’d like to know the consequences of pissing off the supervillains before going around flipping them off. Lord knows heroes are bad enough.”

“She seems nice.”

“She’s friends with at least two members of the SBI.”

“We’re friends with the SBI.”

“We’re something with the SBI,” he muttered.

Tommy frowned at him even though he understood where he was coming from. It was hard to believe that he was casually in some bakery with The Blade and Whippoorwill and planning to willingly just go back to their secret base in the middle of the woods. Yet, Wilbur gestured him forward and he went willingly to stand beside him in front of the counter.

“What would you like to drink?” Niki asked him.

Oh, well, that was a question he had no idea of the answer to. He looked blankly at the board above her head. “Er, do you have any good tea?”

“You don’t like tea,” Tubbo said, surprised. “You whine and complain when I try to drink tea around you because you think it’s gross!”

“Yeah, well, it turns out it’s good when it’s made right,” Tommy said.

“You actual *bastard*. I’ve had to hide my tea for years to escape your ridicule and scorn but suddenly you like ‘grass water’?! ”

“Phil puts stuff in it, I don’t know. It was sweet and didn’t taste like actual dirt juice like your tea. The coffee was still gross though,” Tommy said.

“To be fair, Phil’s shit at making coffee,” Technoblade said. He’d been lingering by the door, but he stepped over to the counter now.

“He is?” Tommy asked curiously. He had not considered that Phil’s coffee tasted like shit because he simply didn’t know how to make it like Tubbo did not know how to make tea apparently. Then again, he did not trust Technoblade when it came to food and drinks, so he would withhold judgment.

“No,” Wilbur said immediately, and the way he said it with a bit of panic only served to pique Tommy’s interest. “He’s great at making coffee. You just don’t like it.”

Tommy squinted at him suspiciously.

“No coffee for you,” Techno said, decisively. “Today at least. We’re still recovering from your foray into tea drinking.” He glanced at Tubbo. “You can have coffee if you want though.”

“Oi! Why can Tubbo have it and I can’t?”

“Tubbo looks like he hasn’t slept in 3 days. He probably needs it.”

“Maybe *I* need it,” Tommy argued. “I’m injured! I need the energy.” This was, of course, a bold-faced lie.

“Oh, now he’s injured,” Wilbur scoffed.

“Recovering from injuries requires real energy from sleeping,” Technoblade said. “Not caffeine.” Tommy frowned and went to argue again, but Technoblade stopped him in his tracks by saying. “You can have hot chocolate instead.”

Tommy had been given chocolate twice by them. Once was as ice cream and once was in muffins, and it had been very good. He did not know what hot chocolate was, but he could guess it was a drink, it was warm, and it was chocolate. Those three things together sounded like they had to be good whereas coffee easily could still be bad. "Fine," he relented.

"You can pick a flavor too if you want," Niki offered with a smile. "I've got a list of all available ones here." She tapped a little sign labeled: 'Add a flavor.'

"Oh," Tommy said, eyes scanning over the sizable selection. He definitely did not know what some of those flavors tasted like. What was Irish Cream? Like milk from Irish cows? "Uh..."

"Techno likes the salted caramel one," she said when she saw him struggling.

Tommy's nose scrunched up. "You put salt in your drink?" he asked, turning to the man.

"You are awfully judgmental for a starving child," Technoblade noted dryly.

"I'm not a child! And it's not my fault you have horrible tastes. First the lumpy bread and now you tell me you drink salt water? Straight from the ocean? Fish pee in that you know."

"Get him the salted-caramel hot chocolate," Technoblade said, choosing to ignore him, "and we'll make Will have a vanilla hot chocolate in case he doesn't like it."

"I didn't consent to that."

Technoblade didn't acknowledge Wilbur's protest. "Then, a salted-caramel macchiato for me and," he glanced at Tubbo who shrugged. "Make it two of those. Plus, let both of them pick a cinnamon roll." He produced a credit card from his wallet and handed it to her.

She rung up the order and pointed out where the cinnamon rolls were in the case so they could both pick one and placed them in a box before moving to make the drinks.

"So, we do have a bit of room in the van. Is there any particularly bothersome produce that needs to be moved?" Wilbur asked. Tommy was immediately interested. That sounded like real illegal activity. By produce he probably meant drugs or something.

"Actually, yeah, there are, like a thousand raspberries in the back and they go bad so fast. I'm afraid they'll start molding in the kitchen. Maybe you could get them stored someplace cooler."

"We can probably do that. I have an inkling the streets will be cleared soon enough and we can get more trucks through."

"Yeah," she said. "How did you get a car all the way here, by the way?"

"Oh," Wilbur said. Tommy could feel Tubbo tensing up beside him. "You know. We have our methods."

"Mmm?" she said, but it was clear Wilbur wasn't giving more than that, and Tubbo relaxed again.

She finished up making one of the drinks and handed it to Tommy. "Thanks," he said when she did. He took a cautious sip, wary of the salt in the drink, but to his surprise he kind of liked it.

"Good?" Wilbur asked with a half-smile. Tommy nodded. "Great," he turned to Niki, putting his hands on the counter in front of her, "can I *please* have a cappuccino then instead?"

“No,” said Technoblade.

“Sure, Will,” Niki replied. She went back to making the other drinks, and Tommy looked down at his hot chocolate. There was a brown cardboard wrap around the white coffee cup with a little symbol on the side that, Tommy realized after a few moments, he recognized even though he’d definitely never been here before.

Dream sometimes came into the office with a cup of coffee with that symbol, though it was by far not the only place he’d get coffee from. He did not seem to have a regular place when it came to coffee. The only reason Tommy remembered it was because Dream always seemed to be in a better mood whenever he came in with a coffee with that or another symbol on it instead of drinking office coffee. He’d always be a bit softer towards everyone on those days, willing to turn a blind eye to mistakes that would normally enrage him and to skip the parts of training Tommy hated.

Tommy was never sure why he was different then, but it was always a relief when those days came. He’d thought maybe caffeine helped keep his energy up. Having superspeed had to take a lot of energy, and maybe it made him tired most days. Still, Tommy wasn’t sure why normal office coffee wouldn’t work just as well. In fact, he was pretty sure it was more caffeinated than normal coffee.

“Alright,” Niki said, “let me just grab those raspberries from the back.”

Tommy watched as she left and came back with a giant box. To his surprise, when he glanced in the box as she handed it to Wilbur, it... literally just had raspberries in it.

“Wait, you’re literally just smuggling raspberries?” Tommy asked. It was definitely illegal, of course. They could get arrested if they were caught, but well, Wilbur could get arrested for a lot of things, so that didn’t matter much. It wasn’t quite what Tommy had in mind when he thought about supervillains’ evil plans.

Wilbur glanced at him. “Well,” he said. “The plants in the city have been growing very fast over the last couple of days including in the community gardens we sponsor.”

“You sponsor gardens?” Tommy asked.

“Yep.”

“Well, I guess that’s a little more illegal than just smuggling food,” he admitted. It was still pretty boring though. Tubbo and Tommy had been about to start something like that themselves before everything went down, though to be fair, it would have just been for them and wouldn’t have been a community garden which wasn’t considered quite as bad. “What else do you do?”

“Hmm.... We give a local hospital illegal donations,” Wilbur said, “and run a tutoring ring.”

“Do you give the hospital corpses?” Tommy asked.

“No,” Wilbur said with an eyeroll. “Mostly we buy them equipment. Techno gives blood sometimes too.”

“Like... his own blood?”

“Yes, Tommy. He doesn’t steal people’s blood to give to the hospital.” Tommy frowned. That was weird. Sure, sometimes certain people would give blood by court order when there was a major shortage, but other than that, only people in jail had to give blood routinely. Tommy didn’t know why Techno would do so voluntarily, but then again, these people were weird.

"I *could* steal blood to give to Fairview," Technoblade said.

"Why that wouldn't work has been explained to you by multiple people, multiple times," Wilbur said. He turned back to Niki then. "We should probably get going before this conversation devolves more," Wilbur said. "See you later, Niki. I'll be in contact about transport for other produce. Sit tight."

"Thanks, Will," she said. "Have a nice day."

They headed back to the car then. Tubbo seemed more at ease getting into the backseat with him this time, probably because he'd already been allowed out of it once before. Technoblade and Wilbur struggled to shove the box of raspberries into the back with Linda while discussing the logistics of getting all of the vegetables out of the city in the coming weeks. Tommy tuned out that boring conversation very quickly.

He and Tubbo made quick work of the cinnamon rolls even though Tommy found he wasn't starving considering he'd eaten a good breakfast as well as probably too many muffins today. Tubbo did seem hungry though and thirsty too (or perhaps he just desperately wanted the caffeine) because he finished both his pastry and his drink far before Tommy did. Tommy, on the other hand, sipped on his hot chocolate for most of the ride back through the city and the woods and had just finished it when they pulled into the driveway that led to the house's garage.

Tubbo kept his hand wrapped around the handle of his bag as they exited the car and walked into the house. Wilbur led them past the room set up for them for now and to the kitchen to find Phil, and that was it... they were here.

Technoblade plopped down onto one of the chairs in the dining area like it was his own home because it... you know... was. Tommy and Tubbo were just in the SBI's kitchen, which was sort of their kitchen now, he guessed, since they'd kind of moved in as of two seconds ago.

There was nothing to mark the transition. They were just there now and that was apparently reality.

There was still tension in the air and more than there had been in the car. Tommy's backpack with everything he'd grabbed from the apartment was still on his back and Tubbo was gripping onto his bag and staring at Phil with an unreadable expression on his face.

A timer dinging suddenly making both Tommy and Tubbo jump.

"Oh," Phil said, turning around to his oven. He grabbed oven mitts and pulled out a tray. When he turned back around, he was looking down at the tray with a pinched brow. "I seem to have made cookies," he said as though he did not quite remember doing so.

"God, I knew we shouldn't have left him alone," Technoblade said.

Phil shot him a look and then looked back at Tommy and Tubbo, tray still in hand. "Hello," he said. "I'm Phil."

"I gathered," Tubbo said tersely.

"Welcome," Phil said with a smile even though Tubbo was as stiff as a board and hadn't offered his own name. "You can help yourself to anything on the table if you'd like," he said, nodding to where the leftover chocolate chip muffins and cheery bread were from earlier. "These too but maybe let them cool a minute."

“The muffins and cheery bread are good,” Tommy said mostly because it was true, but also because he had a feeling Tubbo was hungry still even after the cinnamon roll. He dragged him over towards the table, breaking the weird tension between him and Phil.

Tubbo ate a few more things when Tommy prompted him to and they both had a cookie when they were deemed cool enough. Phil did not leave the room, but he kept enough distance between him and Tubbo for Tubbo to calm down a bit.

Mostly Phil and Wilbur just bickered over who was doing all of these dishes since apparently Wilbur usually did the dishes when Techno and Phil cooked but Wilbur did not want to do all of these extra ones. Phil ended up ultimately losing the argument. Defeated, he turned to cleaning the dishes himself once Tubbo had eaten a few things. He suggested that Wilbur and Technoblade show them around the house since Tommy hadn’t seen most of it yet and Tubbo hadn’t seen any of it at all.

They agreed, starting the tour by showing them around outside the house first. It took a moment for Tommy to figure out why they wanted to show them a bunch of trees, but then he saw that being outside and around the plants calmed Tubbo down quite a bit and he understood.

Then, they showed them each of the rooms on this floor of the building and they even taught them how to get into the hidden staircase to the evil lair under the house. It was hidden by a fancy plate display in the hallway. They did ask them not to go down there by themselves for now because it was easy to get lost. Tubbo looked suspicious at that, but Tommy already knew it was basically a white labyrinth, so thought that was a fair request. He was still going to break into it as soon as they turned their backs though, that was for sure.

Tubbo and Tommy even got their own bathroom, which, of course, Tommy and Tubbo had had their own bathroom to share at their old apartment considering only they lived there, but this was different. This bathroom was about 4 times as large as the one they’d shared before and had a bathtub you could properly lay in to take a bath if you wanted. He’d bet it even had hot and cold water consistently. The only thing about it that made Tommy want to protest was its location.

“Why do we have to walk past a bathroom, Wilbur’s bedroom, and into the living room to get to our bathroom?” he asked.

“The bathroom between our bedrooms is already mine and all of my stuff is in there,” Wilbur explained. “It’s easier this way.”

This explanation seemed very suspicious to Tommy who narrowed his eyes.

“You don’t want to share a bathroom with Wilbur,” Techno supplied. “Trust me.”

“Get over it,” Wilbur said with an eyeroll.

“Sharing a bathroom with Wilbur is really just sharing a bathroom with Phil, but worse because you never have access to your own shampoo.”

“You’ve had your own bathroom for a decade, Technoblade.”

After the two finished squabbling about Wilbur’s bathroom hogging habits, Techno wandered off to his own bedroom, so Wilbur could show Tommy and Tubbo their room.

Tommy had already seen the room of course, but he was still impressed by how nice it was. Wilbur told them they could change the decorations if they wanted, though honestly Tommy liked what was

there already. He also mentioned maybe getting them a desk. There had apparently been one in this room already, but it was a little too big with the bed, so they'd have to get a smaller one. Tubbo's eyes lingered on the two empty pots on the windowsill filled with dirt, and Wilbur explained that they were free to plant whatever they wanted in them.

"Tommy already managed to figure out where clothes for him were, but things that should fit you are in these drawers and the left side of the wardrobe," Wilbur told Tubbo. "They're just approximately sized though, so, if something doesn't fit right, just tell me. We can get it tailored or if you just don't like it, we can replace it with something else."

'Tailored,' Tubbo mouthed at Tommy behind Wilbur's back.

Tommy made a face, 'Rich fuckers,' he mouthed back.

"If there is anything else you want or need, just tell one of us, and we'll get it if we can," Wilbur said with a smile. Considering they casually just have a tailor, apparently, Tommy could probably get an alligator if he wanted one. "Dinner should be in about 45 minutes if the two of you want to get settled."

"Sure," Tubbo said, nodding.

"I'll leave you alone for a bit then," Wilbur said, retreating to the door. He let it close behind him leaving Tubbo and Tommy alone.

Tubbo puffed out a breath, seeming tired as he looked around the room. His eyes lingered on the decorations on the walls and the little knick-knacks all over the place. "Seems like a lot for a business deal," he commented.

"What do you mean?"

Tubbo pulled his gaze to Tommy. "Let's just get settled in first," he said.

Tommy nodded, knowing exactly what he meant by that. He crossed to the wardrobe while Tubbo went to the bookshelf, and they both began methodically taking the entire room apart before putting things carefully back in place like they'd never been touched. They met in the middle of the room at the bed after searching their respective sides. They worked together to lift the mattress up but found nothing in the sheets or the mattress itself. The only thing they did find out was that the full-sized looking bed was actually made of two twin mattresses shoved together with something connecting them. Once finished with their search, they put it all back together again and sat down on top of the reconstructed mattress.

"Nothing," Tubbo said.

"Nothing," Tommy confirmed with a breath. No cameras. No microphones. No wires that set off silent alarms when they opened the window or door.

He turned to Tommy. "So, what the hell do *you* think is going on here, then?"

"What do you mean?"

"This is not the type of room you give to a business associate, Tommy," Tubbo said with a sigh. "Something else is *clearly* going on here."

"Something good or bad, you reckon?"

“I’m not sure yet,” Tubbo said, with a headshake.

They sat in silence for a couple of seconds. “Well, I think the room is pretty pog.”

“It is a nice room,” Tubbo agreed.

“And there aren’t even surveillance instruments in it.”

“They do seem to want us to trust them,” Tubbo said. His eyes landed on one of the empty pots and he stood up to wander over to it. Tommy watched as he slipped some sort of seed into it, and a moment later a dark blueish-purple flower with weird droopy petals started to grow from the soil. Then, he moved to sit on the windowsill and peer out into the forest, hand in his hoodie pocket. Tommy turned to his bag to unpack Henry and set him on the bed next to a bee plushie that had already been there before taking a seat on the mattress.

There was a knock on the door a little while later. “Dinner’s about done,” Wilbur said. “Can I open the door?”

“Sure,” Tommy replied, and the door opened.

“How do you like the room?” he asked, going for casual and missing the mark. It was clear that he really cared what they thought about the room, the idiot.

“If Phil designed it, it’s absolutely pog and I love it. If you did, it sucks and boo,” Tommy said casually.

Wilbur rolled his eyes but smiled too.

“It’s nice,” Tubbo said, turning to hop off the windowsill.

Wilbur turned to smile at him. “That one’s yours by the way,” he said, gesturing at the bee plushie that they’d put carefully back in place next to the pillows on the bed.

“Ah,” Tubbo said, glancing at it. He picked it up to study it for a moment. “It’s cute. Thanks.” He did not seem particularly interested in his plushie, simply placing it on the nightstand next to the left side of the bed.

Wilbur didn’t seem bothered by his lack of interest. “Alright, come on. Dinner time.”

Tubbo tilted his head at him. “Can I take the potted plant with me?” he asked.

“...If it would make you more comfortable, sure,” Wilbur said.

Tubbo nodded and grabbed his flower off the windowsill, caring it with him to the dining room.

Dinner was an awkward affair. Tommy began to get the sense that the awkwardness was between Tubbo and Phil since it’d been relatively fine when it was just Wilbur and Technoblade showing them around. Phil tried to dispel the awkwardness by talking to Tubbo and complimenting his flower, a monkshood apparently, but Tubbo tended to give him one-word answers or frown at him. Eventually, he seemed to decide not singling out Tubbo in conversation was the better plan, and that seemed to loosen up the room at least a bit. The food was good at least despite the tension.

“We’re going to watch a movie after dinner,” Wilbur told them as the meal was wrapping up. “You’re both free to watch with us.”

“Sure,” said Tommy.

Tubbo pursed his lips, seeming unhappy at the prospect. “...Okay.”

“You don’t have to,” Wilbur said.

Tubbo said nothing.

“I know you’re clingy,” Tommy said when Wilbur turned away to help Phil gather up dishes, his voice lowered, “but you can go to bed if you’re tired. I can watch a movie by myself.”

Tubbo shook his head and Tommy sighed. There was nothing to be done when Tubbo decided to be a clingy fuck.

Dinner was cleaned up quickly and they migrated into the living room. Phil stayed in the kitchen to make popcorn even though they’d literally *just* ate and Technoblade went to his room to grab something. Wilbur flopped down on the right side of the couch and grabbed what Tommy recognized as the Netflix remote. Tommy took the initiative to plop down in the seat next to him while he started scrolling through his Netflix account.

“What’s wrong with my recommendations?” he muttered to himself. Tommy suppressed a smirk at that. Tubbo eyed the seating options and eventually decided to take a seat next to Tommy on the last available place on the couch.

Eventually, fed up with his recommendations, he hit the search bar instead. “Any requests?” he asked turning to Tubbo and Tommy.

Tommy stared at him blankly and he imagined Tubbo was giving a similar expression.

“Right,” he said. He thought for a few seconds and then started to type something in.

Technoblade came back from his room with a book (which was weird since they were watching a movie, but Tommy didn’t mention it) and took a seat in the armchair nearest Tubbo. Phil came in with a giant bowl of popcorn and set it on the table in front of them before taking the only remaining seat in an armchair near Wilbur. When everyone settled, Wilbur started the movie.

It ended up being a movie about cars that turned into giant alien robots. Or the other way around? Whatever. It was sort of a loud and actiony movie which is why Tommy was surprised when Tubbo suddenly slumped over about 20 minutes into it and proceeded to not stir when Tommy poked him with his foot.

Tommy shook his head. “He should have just gone to bed.”

Wilbur hummed in agreement and offered him more popcorn which he took even though he literally hadn’t been actually hungry all day. It was, admittedly, a bit more relaxing with Tubbo unconscious than it had been since this morning. If he ended up pressed up against Wilbur’s side, that was purely to give the sleeping Tubbo more room.

When the movie ended, Tubbo was still out cold. At some point Phil had tossed Tommy a blanket to throw over him, but the way he was slumped on the couch still probably wasn’t comfortable.

“Maybe you should wake him up and have him go to bed,” Phil suggested, softly.

Tommy nodded and reached over to shake him. “Tubbo,” he said.

It took a bit of shaking to get him to stir. “Fu’ ‘ff,” was finally murmured back.

Tommy rolled his eyes. “Seriously Tubbo, or I’ll get the water.”

He whined unhappily and peeled his eyes open, but as soon as he clocked where he was, he sat bolt up, smacking their heads together in his haste.

“Ow! Bitch!”

“The movie’s over,” Wilbur told him. “We thought you might want to head to bed since you seem tired.”

Tubbo shook his head. “I’m awake,” he insisted, but his eyes told a different story as they tried to flutter shut against his will.

Technoblade got to his feet. “How about I at least get you a toothbrush and you can get ready for bed even if you don’t end up going to sleep afterwards?” he suggested.

“...Fine,” he agreed. He got to his feet and Technoblade led him off to a hall closet to get some stuff and then he went into their bedroom to get a change of clothes.

He disappeared into the bathroom for about 10 minutes and came back with his hair wet from the shower and dressed in light green pajama pants and a hoodie. Apparently, taking a shower had only made him more tired because he looked dead on his feet.

“C’mon, Tubs,” Tommy said, decisively. “Let’s get you to bed.”

“M’fine,” he murmured.

“Bed,” Tommy said, shoving him in the direction of their room.

“I should stay awake,” he said once the door closed behind them but didn’t resist Tommy shoving him into the bed.

“You’ve got to sleep at some point, Tubbo,” Tommy reasoned. Personally, he wasn’t tired, but he still laid down on the bed next to him. He patted his still damp hair and Tubbo reached out to curl his hands into Tommy’s shirt. His normally cold hands were still warm from the shower. “It’ll be alright.”

The other boy fell back asleep after only a few minutes, his hand going limp against Tommy’s chest. Tommy detangled himself from him to slip back out of the room.

Technoblade had taken over ownership of the television by the time Tommy made it back to the living room. He was playing some video game still seated in the armchair. Phil and Wilbur were partially watching him play, but mostly were just talking to each other in quiet tones.

When Wilbur noticed him, the conversation did not stop, but he smiled welcomingly, and Tommy took the invitation to plop back down on the couch in the same position he’d been in for the movie.

He tuned into the conversation he and Phil were having. “You’re talking about the vegetables again?” he groaned. “Is that all you supervillains *do*? Where’s all the fun stuff?”

Wilbur rolled his eyes, and an arm was suddenly coming for Tommy's neck too fast and close for Tommy to dodge away from it. Before he could even fully register the attack, he'd been yanked to the side and Wilbur's opposite hand was ruffling through his hair, the action quick and intense, but gentle still.

Tommy got the impression that it was supposed to annoy him, but instead, he relaxed into it when he realized that hair ruffling was the extent of the assault. The ruffling slowed into stroking his hair when Wilbur noticed, the already rather forgiving hold around his neck loosening further. "You're technically still a hostage as far as the heroes know," he said. "So, I think that's enough 'fun' for us right now."

"Dumbass," Tommy declared.

"Don't worry, Techno and I will teach you all of the illegal things in time."

"Why not Phil?"

"Phil's a pussy."

Phil reached over to smack at his head with a clearly gentle hand because all Wilbur did was laugh in response.

"I want to steal," Tommy informed him. "I'm good at that."

Wilbur leaned over to whisper conspiratorially directly in Tommy's ear. "We'll practice on Techno."

"No, you won't," said Technoblade without taking his eyes off the screen.

"Yet, if I were to yell at him to fold the laundry while playing that game, he would somehow magically not hear me," Phil said.

"What was that?" Technoblade asked.

Phil tossed a piece of rogue popcorn that had fallen onto the coffee table at his head. He did not react, and it fell to the floor.

Wilbur winked at Tommy meaningfully which he interpreted as confirmation that they were soon going to commit many crimes against Technoblade no matter what he said. Tommy suppressed a chuckle before turning his attention to trying to figure out what Technoblade was doing in his video game.

It wasn't until a couple of hours later that anyone else got tired enough to go to bed, and of course it was old man Philza. He gave Techno a pat on the head that was more like a bop on the head and Wilbur a kiss on the cheek. He hesitated at Tommy but ended up leaning over to ruffle his hair gently before telling them all goodnight and heading into his bedroom.

Technoblade stayed up to play his game and Wilbur sat on his phone for a bit, throwing out comments on the game every so often. Tommy watched Techno play with interest even though he didn't quite know what was going on in the game. He seemed to be winning though, that was for sure if the fireworks going off behind his character every so often meant anything.

Tommy had been wrapped up in watching Techno's character run around so much that he didn't realize Wilbur was starting to nod off until a sudden weight slumped on top of him, pinning one of his arms and most of his torso under the weight.

Ghostbur flickered into existence about half a second later, hovering over the side of the couch Tubbo had vacated hours ago. Tommy had never seen him appear before. He sort of faded in and out over the course of half a minute, not speaking or seeming to see anything before he finally solidified (as much as a ghost astral projection thing solidified).

“You fell asleep on top of me you prick,” Tommy said in a whisper as soon as the ghost had gathered himself enough to look over at him.

Ghostbur did not seem at all properly chided. “Aw! Hello, Tommy.”

Tommy glared at him. “Technoblade, he’s being a prick and has trapped me. Help!”

Technoblade just grunted at him in response, continuing to play his game without so much as a pause.

“You’re useless,” Tommy muttered. Ghostbur reached out to brush Tommy’s hair out of his eyes, and it took Tommy a second to remember... “You fucker,” he said. “Aren’t I blue enough yet?”

“Hmm,” Ghostbur said, his tone warm and soft even though the bop Tommy got on the nose was cold. “No.” Both of his hands descended to cup Tommy’s cheeks.

“You bastard,” Tommy growled. He smacked at him with his free hand, but it just went straight through the ghost despite him being physical enough to hold Tommy’s face captive. Tommy gave up on fighting after a moment, slumping under the warm weight of a sleeping Wilbur and the cold touch of his ghost.

“Technoblade, I *have* Tommy,” Ghostbur cooed, delighted.

“Good job, Ghostbur,” Techno said absently.

“Pricks. Both of you.”

Ghostbur just squeezed his cheeks a bit, content with being an annoyingly affectionate bastard, and Tommy sighed dolefully allowing him to do as he wished.

He fell asleep there on the couch eventually despite Wilbur crushing him. At least, he assumed he did because he didn’t remember anything past some point. Somehow, he made it back to the room they’d given him, though he did not remember walking there.

He would wake up the next morning to Tubbo still asleep next to him. Tubbo would sleep for a few hours more after that, but Tommy would get up. Technoblade and Phil would already be up and drinking coffee together at the kitchen table (which considering Technoblade had still been awake when Tommy fell asleep made Tommy wonder when he slept) and Wilbur would be in the bathroom taking way too long to shower for any normal human being. Tommy would eat breakfast and take a shower himself (not that any soap could scrub the new blue stains off of his face) before Wilbur finally exited his bathroom.

And things could always end up turning bad, but for the moment, Tommy was content.

Oh, kids, you should always let your new Tubbo sniff the Dad™ through the door *before* introducing them.

Also, if you're curious, yes, Technoblade carried both of his idiots to bed when he finally looked up from his game at probably about 3:30 in the morning.

...

What do you mean? Why would you think that was Dream's power? Obviously he just runs fast. :)

Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Phil awoke to screaming on the fourth day or, perhaps more accurately, during the third night as the sun was still far from rising. By the time he'd rushed out of his bedroom, he'd already worked out that the problem was not as serious as he'd believed when he'd startled awake, and he had a good guess about what the problem likely was. There more yelling coming from down the hall now, but it was less of going-to-die yelling and more I-want-to-be-heard yelling. Still not great, but Phil didn't feel the need to grab a weapon. Technoblade was also there, having been faster than Phil by a few seconds despite his bedroom being the furthest away from the altercation going on in the hallway.

"Fuck, fuck, I'm sorry," Wilbur was saying, words slurred just slightly. He was just barely awake, and Phil would guess by context clues that he had not woken naturally in any way. His brow was drawn in pain like when he had a headache, and his eyes were squinting in the dim hallway light implying that Ghostbur had probably forced himself awake rather roughly. He was lingering a couple of steps outside of his bedroom door from where the two parties of this discussion had met halfway.

"What the fuck was that?!" Tubbo asked.

"Calm down, Tubbo, it was just Ghostbur," Tommy tried to interrupt from behind Tubbo.

"Just Ghostbur?! You said it was a dog, not a half see-through man who was going to hover over our fucking bed in the middle of the night! What the fuck where you even doing?!"

"I wasn't doing anything," Wilbur said, rubbing his nose bridge and curling in on himself miserably. "I didn't mean to."

"What do you mean, you didn't mean to? How do you not mean to wander into the room we're sleeping in?"

"Tubbo," Tommy pulled on the back of his sweater. "It's really not that big of a deal. He's..."

"Not that big of a deal?" Tubbo snarled, rounding on him. "I don't know what the fuck they did to you, but since when has someone watching us, *spying* on us while we're unaware, been 'not the big of a deal'?" This wasn't fully about Ghostbur, Phil realized, which was probably obvious, but in Phil's defense he'd been in REM sleep not 50 seconds ago. He wondered what on Earth had happened to them for Tubbo not to even pause at confusion or fear and instead go straight to rage. It piled on to other things like Tommy assuming everything Phil tried to feed him at the beginning was drugged and him jumping out of a window to 'check' if they'd rigged his room with alarms.

"I wasn't," Wilbur said weakly.

"*Bullshit.*"

Technoblade had apparently had enough then, because he stepped forward, pulling Wilbur back by the arm a step and putting himself between the two. It was clear that Tubbo was not a fan of Technoblade's involvement in this altercation by the way his body shifted from an aggressive stance to a more defensive one. Wilbur had been making himself smaller and had been clearly uncomfortable

which made him easy to lash out against, but Techno was a solid wall that would not be bending anytime soon.

Tubbo was bracing for a fight as they eyed each other up for a moment. They were both on the defense now, though it wasn't always easy for people to tell with Technoblade. They made for an interesting mirror of each other standing opposed in the cramped hallway. Both stood in front of another boy that was taller than them, though the difference in height between Wilbur and Techno looked a lot less silly. To be fair, Tubbo had proven himself plenty capable, yet he probably knew he was no match for Techno in this environment.

"Ghostbur gets anxious when he doesn't have anything to do at night," Techno said simply, calmly. "He panics about people getting hurt while they're asleep and vulnerable, and so he likes to check on people. He does it to Phil and me too. It's a little creepy sometimes to see him there, but he's not spying. He just wants to make sure everyone in the house is okay. There isn't any malicious intent there."

"And how am I supposed to know that?" Tubbo asked, arms folding over his chest.

"I guess you can't really," Technoblade acknowledged. "It's just our word, but we haven't lied to you yet."

"That I know of," Tubbo said.

"Tommy didn't mind Ghostbur watching him at night. He stayed with him a couple of nights to keep him company. It's why his face is so blue. I acknowledge that we should have addressed the issue more thoroughly with you before it became an issue."

"Sorry," Tommy whispered quietly. Phil wasn't sure who he was apologizing to or for what precisely.

"Not your fault, Tommy," Technoblade said and then addressed Tubbo. "What would make you feel better?"

"Him not just going into our room whenever he wants for a starter," Tubbo said.

"Okay," Techno said, "and?"

"I don't want any of you in our room, actually," Tubbo said, "awake or whatever is up with him when he's asleep. If it's really our room and you're serious about that, you won't come into it without permission."

"That sounds like an easy enough request for the most part," Techno said. He turned to look behind him. "Will?"

"Yeah," Wilbur said quietly. "I don't think... I think Ghostbur will be able to keep himself from going into their room after this."

"Alright," Technoblade said. "We can do that then. Anything else you need?"

Tubbo shook his head. "Just," he said, arms hugging himself. "Just that."

"Okay then," Technoblade agreed.

After a few seconds of silence, Phil cleared his throat, hoping to kickstart a change in conversation. The occupants of the hallway turned to look at him with varying levels of surprise. Technoblade had

been aware he'd been there from the beginning, and Phil was pretty sure at some point Tommy had clocked him, but both Wilbur and Tubbo had clearly been too distracted to notice he'd followed Techno down the hall. The knowledge he was there seemed to calm Wilbur slightly, but it clearly did the opposite for Tubbo.

"Well," Phil said once they were looking at him, "that was a bit tense for," he squinted at his watch in the hall light, "3:23 am. I'm going to make myself some tea to calm down a bit before trying to get some more sleep. If anyone else would like some, you're free to join me."

He pushed gently past Wilbur and Techno to get to the kitchen door, having punctured the tense air in the hall and being content to let them decide where to go from there. He went about getting the kettle from the shelf they stored it on when not in use and started to fill it in the sink.

To his slight surprise, Tommy was the first member of the household to enter the kitchen and without Tubbo hovering over him like Phil might have expected him to be right now.

"Uh," Tommy said. "Tubbo didn't want tea. He went back to bed."

"That's alright," Phil said with a smile. "Do you want tea though?"

He nodded.

"Well, I know Tech and Will are also going to want some. Could you get us four mugs down?"

"Sure," Tommy agreed. He'd only lived in the house for a few days, and no one had ever told him where things were, but he didn't hesitate to walk directly to the correct cabinet. Phil wasn't sure if he had a naturally good memory and had noticed Phil get mugs from there before or if he'd just cased the joint. Either way, he brought the mugs over to the counter next to the sink Phil had just finished filling the kettle in. "What's that?" Tommy asked as Phil put the kettle back on its base and turned it on.

"It's an electric kettle," Phil said. "It's for warming up the water for the tea."

"Is that why your tea's better than Tubbo's?" he asked. "He warms his water up in a microwave."

"Well," Phil said. "The taste probably has more to do with the quality of the tea being brewed, but if it's not the right temperature because the microwave heats it unevenly, then sometimes it could scorch the leaves and make the tea taste bitter."

"The kettle heats it better?" Tommy asked.

"Yes," Phil replied. "It's more even and it also has sensors that stop it at exactly the right temperature."

"That seems like a much better way to make tea than Tubbo's way."

Phil shrugged. "Tubbo's way works in a pinch for just one person," he said.

Tommy shook his head. "No," he said decisively, "Tubbo's way sucks."

Phil couldn't help but laugh a bit, reaching forward to tousle his hair. "Oh, you are going to be a tea snob, aren't you?"

"I am not," he denied. Now, Phil's son would be smacking his hand away immediately when he started messing up his hair, but Tommy either did not realize that was the socially accepted response

or did not care to push away the affection because he just allowed Phil to mess up his hair without resistance.

“We’ll see,” Phil said.

He glared up at Phil through the strands of hair now in his eyes, but then turned to look back at the kettle. “So, this tea is supposed to make me go back to sleep unlike the other tea?” he asked.

“I’m making herbal tea or a tisane,” Phil explained, opening the cabinet that held their tea stock. “It doesn’t have caffeine, and warm drinks usually help people relax so they can fall asleep easier. How does honey lavender sound?”

He shrugged. “Okay.”

Phil grabbed the tin from the shelf and opened it.

“That’s the tea?” Tommy asked looking at the revealed leaves.

“Yep. It’s loose-leaf tea,” Phil said. “It’s the same stuff that they put in bags, but we usually use infusers for our tea because Wilbur’s picky when it comes to tea.”

“I hear I’m being slandered,” Wilbur said as he entered the kitchen. He still did not seem particularly awake but seemed slightly less foggy.

“It sounds more like Phil is telling facts,” Techno commented from right behind him.

“Shut up Technoblade,” Will said, but it did not have its usual bite to it tonight. “It’s too early to be mean to me.”

“Nah.” Yet, Wilbur was currently sporting a not so stolen Technoblade hoodie, so Phil wasn’t sure how much stock to put in Techno’s denial.

“Phil, he’s being mean to me at 3:30 in the morning,” Wilbur complained, seeming to have forgotten Phil had been the one being ‘mean’ to him first.

“Oh no,” Phil said dryly, but Wilbur did not seem to care about his slight mockery. Instead, he stumbled a couple of sleepy steps forward to collide with Phil’s chest, arms wrapping around him in a hug. Phil hugged him back and Wilbur responded by just squeezing him tighter. “You good?” Phil asked quietly into his curls. Wilbur nodded slightly against his shoulder and then pulled himself away.

He turned to Tommy with a half-smile. “Sorry for freaking Tubbo out.”

Tommy shrugged one shoulder. “It wasn’t just your fault.”

“Still,” Wilbur said. “I should have thought and made sure I wasn’t going to scare him.”

“He’ll come around eventually,” Tommy promised. “Everyone likes Ghostbur. I like Ghostbur.”

“Aw! You like Ghostbur?”

“No!” Tommy said immediately, cheeks reddening as Wilbur’s eyes lit up. “I mean, shut up! I mean, he’s nicer than you, you prick.”

“Aw! You like me,” Wilbur said, throwing his arm around Tommy to wrestle him into a side hug.

“I literally just said the only tolerable version of you is when you’re unconscious,” he said, straining to shove Wilbur away.

“Settle down you two,” Phil said. “We want to try to go back to sleep tonight. Plus, the water for the tea’s almost ready.”

Wilbur gave Tommy one last head pat before releasing him obediently to drag him over to the table right as the kettle clicked off.

Phil brought over the mugs of tea a few minutes later, choosing to take the spot next to Technoblade which put him across from Wilbur who was next to Tommy. Things seemed to calm down a bit once they had their tea, everyone remembering that it was 3:30 in the morning and they had been woken up in the middle of deep sleep.

Technoblade was not as bothered, because his sleeping schedule was atrocious, but even he was clearly feeling tired. Wilbur was also tired, but probably still fighting a bit of a migraine that would hopefully be gone by morning. Tommy, though, quickly became a lost cause. He got exceedingly droopy as the minutes dragged on, his eyelids getting closer and closer together as the level of his tea dropped until he finally finished his tea and propped his face up on his elbow. As Phil watched, his eyes slid closed completely and his elbow slipped a bit as he woke himself back up with a jerk.

“Alright,” Phil chuckled, “we should probably be getting back to bed.”

Tommy slow blinked at him and then nodded tiredly. He stumbled to his feet and paused briefly in front of Phil with his head tilted down. Phil couldn’t help but smile warmly, reaching up to give him the same goodnight gentle hair ruffle that he had the last three nights. Tommy hummed something unidentifiable and went stumbling down the hall back to his bedroom.

Phil turned to Wilbur and Techno then. “You two too,” Phil told them. “You need to get some sleep.”

“You’re probably right,” Techno agreed.

Wilbur nodded once, looking down to stare into his mug.

“Come on Wilbur, finish your tea,” Techno said. “You’re sleeping with me for the rest of the night.”

Wilbur glanced at him and nodded, quickly finishing off the last of his tea. Phil sighed as they left, picking up their mugs and putting them in the sink to deal with them in the morning. Then, he himself crawled back into bed for a few more hours.

Phil had figured the strict no one is allowed in Tommy and Tubbo’s bedroom rule would last a long while considering how worked up Tubbo had been about it, but they had seemingly all not factored in Tommy. Tommy apparently liked having Ghostbur around when he slept, and Phil found him sleeping on the couch the very next night after the bedroom’s ghost embargo began. He’d said he’d wanted to see Ghostbur and had snuck out into the living room where he’d then accidentally had fallen asleep. Phil could not be sure if it really was just a mistake or if he was trying to send a message to Tubbo and he didn’t know enough about their relationship to hazard a guess at this point. He could, however, tell that after three nights of this, neither boy was sleeping particularly well, and both were miserable. Of course, then Wilbur was also upset because he’d caused it and Techno was upset because Wilbur was upset. Not to mention that Wilbur had ended up sleeping in Techno’s room 2 of the 3 nights and in Phil’s once. Ghostbur would be less likely to go wandering around to different people if he fell

asleep already in someone's bedroom, so Wilbur felt more secure going to sleep when someone was with him. However, considering Techno and Wilbur had very different sleeping habits, they were exhausted too.

It all came to a head when Tubbo and Tommy had an argument that had Tommy storming out of the house before breakfast, and Tubbo locking himself in their room for hours. The rest of them did not have to hear the argument to have a pretty good idea of what it was about considering Tommy had just returned to the room from another night on the couch.

Phil took one of his own spare coats (since the ones Wilbur had gotten for Tommy were behind a firmly closed door) and a plate of breakfast to go find Tommy. Luckily, he hadn't gone marching into the woods, but was simply sitting on the roof.

They didn't talk about it. Phil had brought him a thermos of the tea he'd liked so much that first morning (though he only brought the one and they ended up splitting it this time). Tommy wrapped himself up in the coat, not seeming to be bothered by the fact that it was made with wings in mind. Phil got the feeling he wouldn't be getting it back anytime soon.

By the time they came back inside, Wilbur and Techno had somehow managed to get Tubbo out of the room, apparently having renegotiated. The rule became that no one was allowed physically in the room without permission, but if they left the homemade Do Not Disturb sign flipped to blue instead of red, Ghostbur (and only Ghostbur) had permission to come in.

This seemed to satisfy everyone much more than the previous deal and tensions in the house eased quickly. Whatever conversation they'd had seemed to endear Wilbur to Tubbo the slightest amount as well. He'd already liked Techno the best from the beginning, so now both boys had a bit of an in.

He still hated Phil though.

It did not matter what Phil did, and it became increasingly obvious that it wasn't actually personal. He got more comfortable around Phil as the days went by, no longer tensing like he thought Phil was a snake ready to strike at him, but he still obviously did not like or trust him yet and there was no sign of it even inching in that direction the same way it seemed to be for Wilbur and Technoblade.

He did not lash out at Phil directly, not seeming to want to test or challenge him. He simply did not like him. Phil could work with that though especially as he got to the point where he was willing to be alone in the same room with Phil for a few minutes at a time. He was clearly projecting something on Phil that wasn't actually *there* and hopefully he'd eventually realize that.

For now, it was trying to figure out how this would all work. It was learning that once fully rested, Tubbo would get up after Phil, but before Wilbur (luckily Techno was almost always already in the kitchen to prevent too much awkwardness by then) whereas Tommy seemed to get up around the same time as Wilbur. It was getting many very vehement opinions on food out of Tommy and trying to tug them out of Tubbo like pulling teeth until they realized that half of 'Tommy's opinions' were actually Tubbo's. It was learning that with enough food and sleep, Tommy had even more energy than they'd thought, and flowers sometimes bloomed spontaneously from Tubbo's hands when they were idle. Both of the boys seemed surprised about this themselves. They were amazed by what a few good meals and getting enough rest could do for them.

They were both calmest after someone suggested they get outside instead of sitting around the house. Beyond the fact that they lived in the woods and Tubbo had ample access to plants while outside, the calm also came from being able to burn off their newfound excess energy. Wilbur had always been skilled at convincing hardened individuals who insisted they were far too old for silly games to play

them, and he slowly taught them children's games to play outside. Phil got the impression the two friends had never had a chance to actually play together before.

An interesting dynamic developed where Tubbo and Tommy would team against Wilbur in any game or competition until Wilbur tried to drag Technoblade into the game to help him, at which point, more often than not, Technoblade and Tubbo would somehow end up teaming to completely obliterate both Wilbur and Tommy. Except for on the one special occasion where the game was tag and Tommy and Technoblade ended up teamed and Wilbur somehow ended up in the freezing cold lake 'on accident.'

Today, however, there were no dramatic betrayals and screaming from outside for once. It had taken 5 days for the city to realize they were no longer actively under attack from plants and a week more to even start to clear paths through the foliage to rediscover streets. Now that there was some travel possible in the city, it was back to business for them, at least a little bit. Yet, it wasn't the kind of business that would leave Tommy and Tubbo out quite yet.

Wilbur had invited them this morning to go help pick up a large load of the harvested vegetables from the community gardens and both had jumped on the offer. Technoblade had, of course, also gone since he would never pass up an opportunity to get coffee from Niki's. So, Phil was left alone for a couple of hours, allowed for once to get caught up on a book in his living room without all of the chaos that had been the last few weeks.

He was a couple of chapters deep and his tea had cooled to lukewarm when his cell phone began to ring.

He recognized the number of course. He'd been expecting this phone call weeks ago at this point. By now he'd almost forgotten it was coming.

"Hello," he said as he answered.

"Philza."

"Dream," Phil replied, calmly.

"I'm calling about the Red Glider."

Phil tipped his head back to stare at his living room ceiling, the book he'd been reading laid out on his lap. "I would assume," he said. "I'd expected to hear from you much earlier."

"We've been a bit busy here at the Guild," he replied. His voice was level, but it was clear Tubbo's actions in the city had enraged him and that anger was bubbling right under the surface.

"I've heard," Phil said, unable to keep the amusement from his tone. "Quite the supervillain you had on your hands."

"He's not a supervillain," Dream said, his voice hard. Well, Phil thought. We'll have to see about that. "He's a misbehaving child, who thankfully seems to have ceased his tantrum." Phil frowned at that. Convenient for him to do an adult's work but be considered a child when he did not do as ordered. "Speaking of. The Red Glider."

"Hmm," Phil said, not quite ready to let the topic drop. He wanted to know exactly what was going on in this man's head. "I get you were busy, but still. It's been over two weeks, Dream. Seems rather callous to leave one of your own in the hands of a group of supervillains"

“Well, it was his own fault, wasn’t it?” Dream scoffed. “He went against my direct orders and those choices led to their natural conclusions. Not to mention, his friend’s been throwing a fit for no reason. It wasn’t like I could just do what he wanted until he’d given up. Otherwise, it would have looked like I was giving in.”

“So what?” Phil asked, barely restraining the rage elicited by that little speech from bleeding into his voice. “You outsourced his punishment to us?”

“He needed to learn the consequence of his own actions,” Dream said mildly, and Phil felt his face twist up into a nasty snarl even though he knew Dream couldn’t see it. “Besides, I figured getting a go at him might placate you for a bit. Whippoorwill especially seemed to dislike him from what was reported back.” Reported back by Tommy because he’d been fucking terrified of them. “I will be needing him back soon though, so how much do you want for him?”

“Oh,” Phil said. “You’re not getting him back.”

There was a pause on the other end. “Excuse me?”

“Yeah, not happening, mate,” Phil informed him.

Silence again. “Well, I don’t think you would have killed him,” Dream mused. “That doesn’t seem to be your MO even if you don’t like him. Do you plan to keep him prisoner indefinitely? He’s got to get boring at some point.”

“He’s not our prisoner,” Phil said.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean,” Phil said. “Fuck you Dream. A child? Really? What exactly did you think we were going to do to him? I thought we were supposed to be the bad guys, but then again who’s really the villain if the heroes do that?”

“I’m not sure what you’re saying.”

“Let’s put it in a language a hero like you can understand then, Dream,” Phil said. “You ever lay a hand on that kid again, and I will give you an in-person demonstration of the reason I can still take The Blade down in a fight to this day.” He sat forward and lowered his voice even though there was no one to see it. “And the thing is Dream, I care about Technoblade. I don’t *love you*.” The line was quiet in the two second Phil paused before he hung up the phone.

Chapter End Notes

It was in that moment that Dream realized, he fucked up. (Took him long enough to figure it out, huh?)

Well, this is the last proper chapter of One More Step Out of the Pit. The last chapter is an epilogue that's going to take place 6 months later and set up the sequel "One Stone Loose Upon the Footpath." To get to the sequel though, I will need to finish "One Step Forward," "Like Footprints Upon the Seashore," and "Out of Step" because each contribute things needed for the sequel. So, the main storyline will be taking a break after the epilogue. I'll probably also do some

one-shots that take place between this chapter and the epilogue. So, enjoy the prequels and midquels in the meantime!

Thank you all for reading and enjoying! :D

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

And now the epilogue! Note, I posted chapter 25 earlier today, so check that out if you haven't already!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Next April

Winter had officially turned over into spring. Tubbo had spent most of the winter warmer than he'd been in years. There had been plenty of food and more than enough blankets for once. Tubbo had even been convinced to mess around in the snow a few times with the knowledge that he'd be able to easily warm up at any point he wanted. They had a fireplace in their living room for crying out loud.

Winter had been hot chocolate and classic movies that Tubbo and Tommy had never seen. It had been Technoblade coaching Tubbo and Tommy on how to play Mario Kart with the goal purely being to get one of them good enough to beat Wilbur. It was Wilbur teaching them every boardgame they had in their house and then getting fake angry every time Tommy won a game of chance and proceeded to mock him for hours. It was Phil teaching Tommy how to make seasonal cookies and making a small batch of every kind he knew of so they could taste test all of them and find their favorites. It was Tommy happy and... safe for the first time. At least as far as Tubbo could tell, he was safe.

They had been nothing but kind. They had never pushed past the boundaries in place. They never even yelled at them, unless you counted the way Wilbur would yell, but that was never real anger or punishment. He was just loud, and Tommy was loud, and sometimes they screamed at each other to hear themselves be loud. They had been screaming at each other about a hat not a minute ago. A hat that Tommy was now proudly wearing, stolen from Wilbur's head. Tubbo secretly thought the smug look on Wilbur's face probably meant he'd tricked Tommy into wearing a hat outside since there was still a bit of a chill to the air.

Tubbo was a bit worried about what would happen when it became too warm for hoodies. He slid a finger over the back of the little black remote in his pocket. The remote was not an easy thing to hide, and it would just be harder when he was expected to wear shorts and t-shirts. He did not trust leaving it alone in his room, and not, surprisingly, because he thought that one of the adults would go and search the room behind his back. No, they had never crossed that boundary after the issue with Ghostbur in the first week. The problem was Tommy. Phil, Techno, and Wilbur could be in the room with permission, of course, and Tommy was always giving them permission even though he *knew* they were stashing money in there. There were always reasons they were knocking on their door or asking one of them if they could go inside. Tommy routinely stole things from each of them even when Tubbo tried to get him to stop. They were mostly fine with it, but sometimes they needed things back and would ask for permission to look for it.

Tubbo had been so tired once when Wilbur wanted a specific sweater that had mysteriously gone missing from his closet, that he hadn't noticed when the man had wandered near one of the three

money stashes until he'd accidentally pulled out a wad of 20s. He'd politely put it back where it came from and it wasn't like they couldn't do the math to figure out how much money he and Tommy probably had, but it was still terrifying for a moment.

Phil had taken to giving them an allowance even though they didn't *do* anything except occasionally help with the dishes or fold their own laundry. It wasn't a mind-bending amount of cash. They couldn't have afforded the apartment on it or food, but considering housing and food was provided for them, they were able to save more than they had at the Guild, and by that he meant, they were able to save anything at all. Wilbur and Phil often tried to gently suggest they spend it on things they wanted, and they did sometimes, but mostly the \$25 a week each went into the caches in their room. They had enough at this point to put the down payment on an apartment and eat for a month if they had to bolt.

The frustrating thing was they *knew* that. No, they didn't realize just how fast they could bolt, Ranboo one click away if an emergency came up, but they knew they had the means and they never tried to do anything about it. There were no unforeseen taxes to living with them. They didn't get \$5 taken out of their next payment because they left a window open or because they didn't finish everything on their plates or because they just pissed them off. The most they did was gently suggesting they use it on something stupid like candy. In truth, Phil didn't have to give them an allowance at all.

Tubbo had been trying lately as spring started to arrive, to test their boundaries. He'd started to ask for things, but stupid Phil would just smile anytime he actually requested something from him as though happy Tubbo was willing to do so. He didn't even suggest he dip into the allowance to get the things he wanted, in which case, what was it *for*. Every request had been met so far from asking for a replacement sweater when he'd been the one to rip the one they'd already given him in the first place to requesting they buy a certain flavor coffee even though clearly Technoblade was the one who got to decide on coffee. After about a month of this, Tubbo had thought he'd finally come up with something Phil would never agree to. Which is why Tubbo was now standing in a little cleared out area outside his and Tommy's window near a recently rebuilt garden shed.

Phil was holding out a bag filled with seed packets cheerfully and Tubbo took it numbly.

Tubbo hadn't... actually wanted to grow a garden. It had been purely asked for because he'd thought Phil would finally deny him something. Why would you give someone like Tubbo control over so many seeds? He gave him seeds and a place with soil to grow them willingly. What would it take with this man?

"Wow," Tommy said, peering into the bag from Tubbo's side, "there's all types of things in there."

Tubbo rolled his eyes. "This is a bribe. He's trying to bribe me into liking him, Tommy," Tubbo said, glaring at Phil. Phil just gave him a half-smile back, irritatingly amused.

"You're bribing people?" Tommy asked Phil. "No fair. I want a bribe!"

Phil laughed softly, turning his eyes to him. There was a softness in his gaze that made Tubbo look away. "What type of bribe would you like?"

Tommy's eyes lit up. "I want... you to fly me up really high and drop me from above a cloud!"

"I think that can be arranged," Phil replied easily.

"Really?" Tommy asked, still somehow surprised even after almost 6 months of *this*. They'd made it clear multiple times that they'd give him anything he asked for.

“Of course,” Phil said. “In a bit, though. I want to help Tubbo get his garden set up a bit more first.”

“That’s okay,” Tommy said. “Techno said he wanted to train with me a bit.” Tubbo was still surprised how freely happy about something like training Tommy could be after how Dream had ‘trained’ him, but Techno was... Techno was a lot different. The most he’d gotten hurt was from falling and Wilbur was always there to fuss for the next decade about it.

It was nice. It was.

Tubbo was waiting for the other shoe to drop because he knew it would. There was always something that could end the kindness and being surprised about it when it happened would always hurt worse.

He zoned out as Tommy and Phil talked a bit about what he and Techno were planning to do today, staring at the bag of seeds handed so easily to him.

He was not ready to make a garden here.

Later That Night

For once, Schlatt wasn’t startled by the ghost showing up. That had little to do with him being prepared for him to show up at this exact time and place (though he was aware of that beforehand) and more to do with the fact that the visage actually appeared walking down the street towards him instead of popping into existence at his side.

“Hello, Schlatt,” he said. He was different tonight, more solid looking than usual, though he was still dripping blue from his eyes, his hands, and the hole in his stomach. He also didn’t have as much of that echoey distance to his tone, but then again, apparently he was supposed to be awake right now. This was more an astral projection than a ghost today, though the lines always got blurry with him.

“Hey, Ghostbur,” he said, stuffing his hands into his pockets. “Ready to prove once and for all if you’re just a vivid hallucination that spawned from alcohol withdrawal.”

“You haven’t drunk in years, Schlatt,” Ghostbur pointed out with an eyeroll, an expression that was... honestly weird coming from him. He held out his hand and dropped something into Schlatt’s palm. It was a warm, glowing golden orb, that shined brightly except for the places it had been marred by blue fingertips.

“This?” Schlatt asked skeptically.

“It’s a modified suppression orb,” he explained. “It should suppress the influence of the mental barrier long enough for you to get out of the Nether.”

“And for the physical barrier?”

“I thought you were a drunk?” Ghostbur said. “Never play chicken with the barrier?”

Schlatt raised an eyebrow. “I was a drunk, not a fool,” he said. “What do you mean?”

“There’s a small hole in the physical barrier down the street. There’s a game where drunk people try to get as close as they can to it before being pushed back by the mental one. We’ve slowly made it a

little bit bigger while we worked on the orb so you can get through easier. Follow me.”

And honestly, Schlatt’s world had been so weird since he’d first met this ghost more than half a decade ago. At this point, why wouldn’t he go following it around.

They went towards a slightly seeder area of the upper ring of the Pit. Ghostbur did not chatter on like he normally did, apparently in one of his rare serious moods. A shiver went down Schlatt’s spine at the memory of the last ‘serious mood,’ but the ghost wasn’t pissed this time at least.

Schlatt caught some of the drunks loitering around looking up at him strangely as he approached the barrier with a transparent man beside him, but he ignored them. They’d all just assume they were seeing things anyway. Even if they didn’t, who cared.

“Alright,” Ghostbur said. “I’ll meet you on the other side. Follow the blue line,” he pointed at Schlatt’s feet and Schlatt looked down to see a blue splattered line. When he looked back up, the ghost was gone. He wrapped his hand around the glowing orb and took a step into the boundaries of the mental barrier around the pit.

He could hear it instantly, like thousands of voices whispering around him that grew stronger as he took a few more steps along the blue marked path, but there was some distance between them and him, like there was a glass window separating them. He took another step forward along the draw out path and the world suddenly shifted, the light around the barrier bending and he could abruptly see the world on the other side of the barrier for the first time in his life. There was a hole there in the dark wispy wall that made up the physical barrier, and on the other side of it, just a step away stood two men. He recognized one of them even though he’d never seen him in the flesh.

The mental barrier tried one more time to shove him back, raging against whatever protection the orb gave him with angry hisses. It almost made him want to turn back despite there only being a step more to go. Yet, he did not. Instead, he took the one more step out of the Pit.

The orb glowing in his hand sputtered out the second he crossed the barrier for good. He probably couldn’t even go back if he tried.

“Hello Schlatt,” a voice said, recognizable but far too grounded to be familiar. A hand was offered to him, and with a blink Schlatt took it. “I’m Wilbur and this is Phil. How was the trip?”

“Weird,” Schlatt said squinting around at where they were. It was dark and they were surrounded by metal. “Is this the Overworld?” he asked, scrunching his nose.

Wilbur laughed. “*This* is a sewer,” he said. “It’s a lot nicer above ground. You’ll see.” He paused. “Also, do me a big favor. Don’t touch any soil that could possibly have a dead body buried in it until we’ve had a talk.”

“...*What?*”

“Long story.”

Chapter End Notes

Schlatt and everyone but Wilbur, Techno, and Phil: What?

Wilbur: Haha, yeah. Really don't want to deal with necromancy tonight, my dudes.

And on that note, this story is done! Everyone will return in "One Stone Loose Upon the Footpath." Until then, have a nice day. :)

End Notes

Hello. People keep freaking out about getting rid of Dream and adopting Ranboo because we are almost at the end of the story. Do not fear. There is a sequel set 6 months after the end of this story which is when we will deal with these things. ;)

People asked about it and I do have a discord already. I've made a section for people who like this story. Make sure to do the self-assigned rolls to see the Dream SMP content.

<https://discord.gg/ZtyFQN6qPm>

(The name was an in joke)

Also! We have some fan art!

[Chapter 12.](#)

[Another from Chapter 12.](#)

[One for the end note for Chapter 13.](#)

[One for Chapter 15](#)

[One for Chapter 17](#)

I told you not to think about the end of Chapter 19, but you all couldn't help yourselves.

[One.](#)

[Two.](#)

[Three.](#)

[Four.](#)

[Five.](#)

(I... feel like there was another one, so if there was and I didn't link it, please send it again.)

[Aaand a just general blue stained Tommy with Henry_pic.](#)

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